A BOOK OF ESSAYS

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THE ART OF POLITICAL LYING

The author, in his preface, makes some very judicious reflections upon the original of arts and sciences: that at first they consist of scattered theorems and practices, which are handed about among the masters, and only revealed to the *filii artis*, till such time as some great genius appears, who collects these disjointed propositions, and reduces them into a regular system. That this is the case of that noble and useful art of political lying, which in this last age having been enriched with several new discoveries, ought not to lie any longer in rubbish and confusion, but may justly claim a place in the "Encyclopædia," especially such as serves for a model of education for an able politician. That he proposes to himself no small stock of fame in future ages, in being the first who has undertaken this design; and for the same reason he hopes the imperfection of his work will be excused. He invites all persons who

have any talents that way, or any new discovery, to communicate their thoughts, assuring them that honourable mention shall be made of them in his work.

The First Volume consists of Eleven Chapters

In the first chapter of his excellent treatise he reasons philosophically concerning the nature of the soul of man, and those qualities which render it susceptible of lies. He supposes the soul to be of the nature of a plano-cylindrical speculum, or looking-glass; that the plain side was made by God Almighty, but that the Devil afterwards wrought the other side into a cylindrical figure. The plain side represents objects just as they are; and the cylindrical side, by the rules of catoptrics, must needs represent true objects false, and false objects true; but the cylindrical side being much the larger surface, takes in a greater compass of visual rays. That upon the cylindrical side of the soul of man depends the whole art and success of political lying. The author, in this chapter, proceeds to reason upon the qualities of the mind: as its peculiar fondness of the malicious and the miraculous. The tendency of the soul toward the malicious, springs from self-love, or a pleasure to find mankind more wicked, base, or unfortunate than ourselves. The design of the miraculous proceeds from the inactivity of the soul, or its incapacity to be moved or delighted

with anything that is vulgar or common. The author having established the qualities of the mind, upon which his art is founded, he proceeds—

In his second chapter, to treat of the nature of political lying; which he defines to be, the art of convincing the people of salutary falsehoods for some good end. He calls it an art to distinguish it from that of telling truth, which does not seem to want art; but then he would have this understood only as to the invention, because there is indeed more art necessary to convince the people of a salutary truth than a salutary falsehood. Then he proceeds to prove that there are salutary falsehoods, of which he gives a great many instances, both before and after the Revolution; and demonstrates plainly, that we could not have carried on the war so long without several of those salutary falsehoods. He gives rules to calculate the value of a political lie, in pounds, shillings, and pence. By good, he does not mean that which is absolutely so, but what appears so to the artist, which is a sufficient ground for him to proceed upon; and he distinguishes the good, as it commonly is, into *bonum utile, dulce et honestum*. He shows you that there are political lies of a mixed nature, which include all the three in different respects; that the *utile* reigns generally about the exchange, the *dulce* and *honestum* at the Westminster end of the town. One man spreads a lie to sell or buy stock to greater advantage; a second, because it is honourable to serve his party; and a third,

because it is sweet to gratify his revenge. Having explained the several terms of his definition, he proceeds—

In his third chapter, to treat of the lawfulness of political lying; which he deduces from its true and genuine principles, by inquiring into the several rights that mankind have to truth. He shows that people have a right to private truth from their neighbours, and economical truth from their own family; that they should not be abused by their wives, children, and servants; but that they have no right at all to political truth; that the people may as well all pretend to be lords of manors, and possess great estates, as to have truth told them in matters of government. The author, with great judgment, states the several shares of mankind in this matter of truth, according to their several capacities, dignities, and professions; and shows you that children have hardly any share at all; in consequence of which, they have very seldom any truth told them. It must be owned that the author, in this chapter, has some seeming difficulties to answer, and texts of scripture to explain.

The fourth chapter is wholly employed in this question, "Whether the right of coinage of political lies be wholly in the government?" The author, who is a true friend to English liberty, determines in the negative, and answers all the arguments of the opposite party with great acuteness: that, as the government of England has a mixture of democratical in it, so the right of

inventing and spreading political lies is partly in the people; and their obstinate adherence to this just privilege has been most conspicuous, and shined with great lustre of late years: that it happens very often that there are no other means left to the good people of England to pull down a ministry and government they are weary of but by exercising this their undoubted right: that abundance of political lying is a sure sign of true English liberty: that as ministers do sometimes use tools to support their power, it is but reasonable that the people should employ the same weapon to defend themselves, and pull them down.

In his fifth chapter, he divides political lies into several species and classes, and gives precepts about the inventing, spreading, and propagating the several sorts of them: he begins with the *rumores* and *libelli famosi*, such as concern the reputation of men in power; where he finds fault with the common mistake, that takes notice only of one sort, *viz.*, the detractory or defamatory; whereas in truth there are three sorts, the detractory, the additory, and the translatory. The additory gives to a great man a larger share of reputation than belongs to him, to enable him to serve some good end or purpose. The detractory, or defamatory, is a lie which takes from a great man the reputation that justly belongs to him, for fear he should use it to the detriment of the public. The translatory is a lie, that transfers the merit of a man's good action to another, who is in

himself more deserving; or transfers the demerit of a bad action from the true author to a person who is in himself less deserving. He gives several instances of very great strokes in all the three kinds, especially in the last, when it was necessary, for the good of the public, to bestow the valour and conduct of one man upon another, and that of many to one man: nay even, upon a good occasion, a man may be robbed of his victory by a person that did not command in the action. The restoring and destroying the public may be ascribed to persons who had no hand in either. The author exhorts all gentlemen practitioners to exercise themselves in the translatory, because the existence of the things themselves being visible, and not demanding any proof, there wants nothing to be put upon the public, but a false author, or a false cause; which is no great presumption upon the credulity of mankind, to whom the secret springs of things are for the most part unknown.

The author proceeds to give some precepts as to the additory; that when one ascribes anything to a person which does not belong to him, the lie ought to be calculated not quite contradictory to his known qualities; for example, one would not make the French king present at a Protestant conventicle; nor, like queen Elizabeth, restore the overplus of taxes to his subjects. One would not bring in the Emperor giving two months' pay in advance to his troops; nor the Dutch paying more than their quota. One would

not make the same person zealous for a standing army, and public liberty; nor an atheist support the church; nor a lewd fellow a reformer of manners; nor a hot-headed, crack-brained coxcomb forward for a scheme of moderation. But, if it is absolutely necessary that a person is to have some good adventitious quality given him, the author's precept is, that it should not be done at first *in extremo gradu*. For example, they should not make a covetous man give away all at once 5,000*l*. in a charitable, generous way; 20*l*. or 30*l*. may suffice at first. They should not introduce a person of remarkable ingratitude to his benefactors, rewarding a poor man for some good office that was done him thirty years ago; but they may allow him to acknowledge a service to a person who is capable still to do him another. A man, whose personal courage is suspected, is not at first to drive whole squadrons before him; but he may be allowed the merit of some squabble, or throwing a bottle at his adversary's head.

It will not be allowed to make a great man that is a known despiser of religion spend whole days in his closet at his devotion; but you may with safety make him sit out public prayers with decency. A great man, who has never been known willingly to pay a just debt, ought not all of a sudden to be introduced making restitution of thousands he has cheated; let it suffice at first to pay 20*l*. to a friend who has lost his note.

He lays down the same rules in the detractory

or defamatory kind; that they should not be quite opposite to the qualities the persons are supposed to have. Thus it will not be found according to the sound rules of pseudology to report of a pious and religious prince that he neglects his devotion, and would introduce heresy; but you may report of a merciful prince, that he has pardoned a criminal who did not deserve it. You will be unsuccessful if you give out of a great man, who is remarkable for his frugality for the public, that he squanders away the nation's money; but you may safely relate that he hoards it; you must not affirm he took a bribe, but you may freely censure him for being tardy in his payments; because, though neither may be true, yet the last is credible, the first not. Of an open-hearted, generous minister, you are not to say that he was in an intrigue to betray his country; but you may affirm, with some probability, that he was in an intrigue with a lady. He warns all practitioners to take good heed to these precepts; for want of which many of their lies of late have proved abortive or short-lived.

In the sixth chapter, he treats of the miraculous; by which he understands anything that exceeds the common degrees of probability. In respect to the people, it is divided into two sorts, the *to phoberon* or the *to thumoeides*, terrifying lies, and animating or encouraging lies; both being extremely useful on their proper occasions. Concerning the *to phoberon* he gives several rules;

one of which is, that terrible objects should not be too frequently shown to the people lest they grow familiar. He says, it is absolutely necessary that the people of England should be frighted with the French king and the pretender once a year; but that the bears should be chained up again till that time twelvemonth. The want of observing this so necessary a precept, in bringing out the raw head and bloody bones upon every trifling occasion, has produced great indifference in the vulgar of late years. As to the animating or encouraging lies, he gives the following rules: that they shall not far exceed the common degrees of probability; that there should be variety of them; and the same lie not obstinately insisted upon: that the promissory of prognosticating lies should not be upon short days, for fear the authors should have the shame and confusion to see themselves speedily contradicted. He examines, by these rules, that well-meant. but unfortunate lie of the conquest of France which continued near twenty years together; but at last, by being too obstinately insisted upon, it was worn threadbare, and became unsuccessful.

As to the *to teratōdes*, or the prodigious, he has little to advise, but that their comets, whales, and dragons should be sizeable; their storms, tempests, and earthquakes, without the reach of a day's journey of a man and horse.

The seventh chapter is wholly taken up in an inquiry, which of the two parties are the greatest

artists in political lying? He owns, that sometimes the one party, and sometimes the other, is better believed; but that they have both very good geniuses among them. He attributes the ill success of either party to their glutting the market, and retailing too much of a bad commodity at once: when there is too great a quantity of worms it is hard to catch gudgeons. He proposes a scheme for the recovery of the credit of any party, which indeed seems to be somewhat chimerical, and does not savour of that sound judgment the author has shown in the rest of the work. It amounts to this, that the party should agree to vent nothing but truth for three months together, which will give them credit for six months' lying afterwards. He owns, that he believes it almost impossible to find fit persons to execute this scheme. Towards the end of the chapter he inveighs severely against the folly of parties, in retaining scoundrels and men of low genius to retail their lies; such as most of the present news-writers are; who, except a strong bent and inclination towards the profession, seem to be wholly ignorant in the rules of pseudology, and not at all qualified for so weighty a trust.

In his next chapter he treats of some extraordinary geniuses, who have appeared of late years, especially in their disposition towards the miraculous. He advises those hopeful young men to turn their invention to the service of their country; it being inglorious, at this time,

to employ their talent in prodigious fox-chases, horse-courses, feats of activity in driving of coaches, jumping, running, swallowing of peaches, pulling out whole sets of teeth to clean, etc., when their country stands in so much need of their assistance.

The eighth chapter is a project for uniting the several smaller corporations of liars into one society. It is too tedious to give a full account of the whole scheme; what is most remarkable is, that this society ought to consist of the heads of each party; that no lie is to pass current without their approbation, they being the best judges of the present exigencies, and what sorts of lies are demanded; that in such a corporation there ought to be men of all professions, that *to prepon*, and the *to eulogon*, that is, decency and probability, may be observed as much as possible; that, besides the persons above mentioned, this society ought to consist of the hopeful geniuses about the town (of which there are great plenty to be picked up in the several coffee-houses), travellers, virtuosoes, fox-hunters, jockeys, attorneys, old seamen and soldiers out of the hospitals of Greenwich and Chelsea: to this society, so constituted, ought to be committed the sole management of lying; that in their outer room there ought always to attend some persons endowed with a great stock of credulity, a generation that thrives mightily in this soil and climate: he thinks a sufficient number of them may be picked up anywhere about the Exchange: these are to circulate what the others coin: for

no man spreads a lie with so good a grace as he that believes it: that the rule of the society be to invent a lie, and sometimes two, for every day; in the choice of which great regard ought to be had to the weather and the season of the year; your *phobera*, or terrifying lies, do mighty well in November and December, but not so well in May and June, unless the easterly winds reign: that it ought to be penal for anybody to talk of anything but the lie of the day: that the society is to maintain a sufficient number of spies at court, and other places, to furnish hints and topics for invention, and a general correspondence of all the market towns for circulating their lies: that if any one of the society were observed to blush, or look out of countenance, or want a necessary circumstance in telling the lie, he ought to be expelled, and declared incapable: besides the roaring lies, there ought to be a private committee for whisperers, constituted of the ablest men of the society. Here the author makes a digression in praise of the Whig party, for the right understanding and use of proof-lies. A proof-lie is like a proof-charge for a piece of ordnance, to try a standard credulity. Of such a nature he takes transubstantiation to be in the Church of Rome, a proof-article, which if any one swallows, they are sure he will digest everything else; therefore the Whig party do wisely, to try the credulity of the people sometimes by swingers, that they may be able to judge to what height they may charge them afterwards.

Towards the end of this chapter, he warns the heads of parties against believing their own lies, which has proved of pernicious consequences of late; both a wise party, and a wise nation, having regulated their affairs upon lies of their own invention. The causes of this he supposed to be, too great a zeal and intenseness in the practice of this art, and a vehement heat in mutual conversation, whereby they persuade one another, that what they wish, and report to be true, is really so: that all parties have been subject to this misfortune. The Jacobites have been constantly infested with it; but the Whigs of late seemed even to exceed them in this ill habit and weakness. To this chapter the author subjoins a calendar of lies, proper for several months of the year.

The ninth chapter treats of the celerity and duration of lies. As to the celerity of their motion, the author says it is almost incredible: he gives several instances of lies that have gone faster than a man can ride post: your terrifying lies travel at a prodigious rate, above ten miles an hour: your whispers move in a narrow vortex, but very swiftly. The author says, it is impossible to explain several phænomena in relation to the celerity of lies, without the supposition of synchronism and combination. As to the duration of lies, he says there are of all sorts, from hours and days to ages; that there are some which, like insects, die and revive again in a different form; that good artists, like people who build upon a short lease, will calculate the duration of a lie surely to answer

their purpose; to last just as long, and no longer, than the turn is served.

The tenth chapter treats of the characteristics of lies; how to know when, where, and by whom invented. Your Dutch, English, and French ware are amply distinguished from one another; an Exchange lie from one coined at the other end of the town: great judgment is to be shown as to the place where the species is intended to circulate: very low and base coin will serve for Wapping: there are several coffee-houses that have their particular stamps, which a judicious practitioner may easily know. All your great men have their proper phantateustics. The author says he has attained, by study and application, to so great skill in this matter that, bring him any lie, he can tell whose image it bears so truly, as the great man himself shall not have the face to deny it. The promissory lies of great men are known by shouldering, hugging, squeezing, smiling, bowing; and their lies in matter of fact, by immoderate swearing.

He spends the whole eleventh chapter on one simple question, whether a lie is best contradicted by truth, or by another lie? The author says that, considering the large extent of the cylindrical surface of the soul, and the great propensity to believe lies in the generality of mankind of late years, he thinks the properest contradiction to a lie is another lie. For example if it should be reported that the pretender was in London, one would not contradict it by saying, he never was in England; but you must prove

by eye-witnesses that he has come no further than Greenwich, and then went back again. Thus if it be spread about that a great person were dying of some disease, you must not say the truth, that they are in health, and never had such a disease, but that they are slowly recovering of it. So there was not long ago a gentlemen, who affirmed, that the treaty with France, for bringing popery and slavery into England, was signed the 15th of September; to which another answered very judiciously, not, by opposing truth to his lie, that there was no such treaty; but that, to his certain knowledge, there were many things in that treaty not yet adjusted.

[The account of the second volume of this excellent treatise is reserved for another time.]

THE EXAMINER No. XV

From Thursday November 2, to Thursday November 9, 1710

I am prevailed on, through the importunity of friends, to interrupt the scheme I had begun in my last paper, by an Essay upon the Art of Political Lying. We are told, "the Devil is the father of lies, and was a liar from the beginning"; so that beyond contradiction, the invention is old: And which is more, his first essay of it was purely political, employed in undermining the authority of his Prince, and seducing a third part of the subjects from their obedience. For which he was driven down from Heaven, where (as Milton expresseth it) he had been viceroy of a great western province; and forced to exercise his talent in inferior regions among other fallen spirits, or poor deluded men, whom he still daily tempts to his own sin, and will ever do so till he is chained in the bottomless pit.

But though the Devil be the father of lies, he seems, like other great inventors, to have lost much of his reputation, by the continual improvements that have been made upon him.

Who first reduced lying into an art, and adapted it to politics, is not so clear from history,

though I have made some diligent enquiries: I shall therefore consider it only according to the modern system, as it has been cultivated these twenty years past in the southern part of our own island.

The poets tell us, that after the giants were overthrown by the gods, the earth in revenge produced her last offspring, which was Fame.* And the fable is thus interpreted; that when tumults and seditions are quieted, rumours and false reports are plentifully spread through a nation. So that by this account, *lying* is the last relief of a routed, earth-born, rebellious party in a state. But here, the moderns have made great additions, applying this art to the gaining of power, and preserving it, as well as revenging themselves after they have lost it: as the same instruments are made use of by animals to feed themselves when they are hungry, and bite those that tread upon them.

But the same genealogy cannot always be admitted for *political lying;* I shall therefore desire to refine upon it, by adding some circumstances of its birth and parents. A political lie is sometimes born out of a discarded statesman's head, and thence delivered to be nursed and dandled by the mob: Sometimes it is produced a monster, and *licked* into shape; at other times it comes into the world completely formed, and is spoiled in the

* Fama was said to be a daughter of Terra. See Virgil, "Aeneid," iv. 173-178. (T.S.)

licking. It is often born an infant in the regular way, and requires time to mature it: and often it sees the light in its full growth, but dwindles away by degrees. Sometimes it is of noble birth; and sometimes the spawn of a stock-jobber. *Here*, it screams aloud at the opening of the womb; and *there*, it is delivered with a whisper. I know a lie that now disturbs half the kingdom with its noise, which though too proud and great at present to own its parents, I can remember in its whisper-hood. To conclude the nativity of this monster; when it comes into the world without a *sting*, it is still-born; and whenever it loses its sting, it dies.

No wonder, if an infant so miraculous in its birth, should be destined for great adventures: and accordingly we see it has been the guardian spirit of a prevailing party for almost twenty years It can conquer kingdoms without fighting, and sometimes with the loss of a battle: It gives and resumes employments; can sink a mountain to a mole-hill, and raise a mole-hill to a mountain; has presided for many years at committees of elections; can wash a blackamoor white; make a saint of an atheist, and a patriot of a profligate; can furnish foreign ministers with intelligence, and raise or let fall the credit of the nation. This goddess flies with a huge looking-glass in her hands, to dazzle the crowd, and make them see, according as she turns it, their ruin in their interest, and their interest in their ruin. In this glass you will behold your best friends clad in

coats powdered with *flower-de-luces** and triple crowns; their girdles hung round with chains, and beads, and wooden shoes: and your worst enemies adorned with the ensigns of liberty, property, indulgence and moderation, and a cornucopia in their hands. Her large wings, like those of a flying-fish, are of no use but while they are moist; she therefore dips them in mud, and soaring aloft scatters it in the eyes of the multitude, flying with great swiftness; but at every turn is forced to stoop in dirty way for new supplies.

I have been sometimes thinking, if a man had the art of the second sight for seeing lies, as they have in Scotland for seeing spirits, how admirably he might entertain himself in this town; to observe the different shapes, sizes, and colours, of those swarms of lies which buzz about the heads of some people, like flies about a horse's ears in summer: or those legions hovering every afternoon in Popes-head Alley, enough to darken the air; or over a club of discontented grandees and thence sent down in cargoes to be scattered at elections.

There is one essential point wherein a political liar differs from others of the faculty; that he ought to have but a short memory, which is necessary, according to the various occasions he

* A reply to the insinuations that the Tories were sympathetic to France, and that the Whigs were the true patriots. (T.S.)

meets with every hour, of differing from himself, and swearing to both sides of a contradiction, as he finds the persons disposed, with whom he has to deal. In describing the virtues and vices of mankind, it is convenient upon every article, to have some eminent person in our eye, from whence we copy our description. I have strictly observed this rule; and my imagination this minute represents before me a certain great man* famous for this talent, to the constant practice of which he owes his twenty years' reputation of the most skilful head in England, for the management of nice affairs. The superiority of his genius consists in nothing else but an inexhaustible fund of political lies which he plentifully distributes every minute he speaks, and by an unparalleled generosity forgets, and consequently contradicts the next half-hour. He never yet considered whether any proposition were true or false, but whether it were convenient for the present minute or company to affirm or deny it; so that if you think to refine upon him, by interpreting every thing he says, as we do dreams by the contrary, you are still to seek, and will find yourself equally deceived, whether you believe him or no: the only remedy is to suppose that you have heard some inarticulate sounds, without any meaning at all. And besides, that will take off the horror you might be apt to conceive at the oaths wherewith he perpetually tags both ends of every proposition:

* The Earl of Wharton. (T.S.)

though at the same time I think he cannot with any justice be taxed for perjury, when he invokes God and Christ, because he has often fairly given public notice to the world, that he believes in neither.

Some people may think that such an accomplishment as this, can be of no great use to the owner or his party, after it has been often practised, and is become notorious; but they are widely mistaken: Few lies carry the inventor's mark; and the most prostitute enemy to truth may spread a thousand without being known for the author. Besides, as the vilest writer has his readers, so the greatest liar has his believers; and it often happens, that if a lie be believed only for an hour, it has done its work, and there is no further occasion for it. Falsehood flies, and Truth comes limping after it; so that when men come to be undeceived, it is too late, the jest is over, and the tale has had its effect: like a man who has thought of a good repartee, when the discourse is changed, or the company parted: or, like a physician who has found out an infallible medicine, after the patient is dead.

Considering that natural disposition in many men to lie, and in multitudes to believe, I have been perplexed what to do with that maxim, so frequent in every body's mouth, that "Truth will at last prevail." Here, has this island of ours, for the greatest part of twenty years, lain under the influence of such counsels and persons, whose principle and interest it was to corrupt

our manners, blind our understandings, drain our wealth, and in time destroy our constitution both in Church and State; and we at last were brought to the very brink of ruin; yet by the means of perpetual misrepresentations, have never been able to distinguish between our enemies and friends. We have seen a great part of the nation's money got into the hands of those, who by their birth, education, and merit, could pretend no higher than to wear our liveries; while others, who by their credit, quality and fortune, were only able to give reputation and success to the Revolution, were not only laid aside, as dangerous and useless; but loaden with the scandal of Jacobites, men of arbitrary principles, and pensioners to France; while Truth, who is said to lie in a well, seemed now to be buried there under a heap of stones. But I remember, it was a usual complaint among the Whigs, that the bulk of landed men was not in their interests, which some of the wisest looked on as an ill omen; and we saw it was with the utmost difficulty that they could preserve a majority, while the court and ministry were on their side; till they had learned those admirable expedients for deciding elections, and influencing distant boroughs by *powerful motives* from the city. But all this was mere force and constraint, however upheld by most dexterous artifice and management: till the people began to apprehend their properties, their religion, and the monarchy itself in danger; then we saw them greedily laying hold on the first

occasion to interpose. But of this mighty change in the dispositions of the people, I shall discourse more at large in some following paper; wherein I shall endeavour to undeceive those deluded or deluding persons, who hope or pretend, it is only a short madness in the vulgar, from which they may soon recover. Whereas I believe it will appear to be very different in its causes, its symptoms, and its consequences; and prove a great example to illustrate the maxim I lately mentioned, that "Truth" (however sometimes late) "will at last prevail."

A LETTER OF ADVICE TO A YOUNG POET, TOGETHER WITH A PROPOSAL FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF POETRY IN IRELAND

December 1, 1720.

SIR,

As I have always professed a friendship for you, and have therefore been more inquisitive into your conduct and studies than is usually agreeable to young men, so I must own I am not a little pleased to find, by your last account, that you have entirely bent your thoughts to English poetry, with design to make it your profession and business. Two reasons incline me to encourage you in this study; one, the narrowness of your present circumstances; the other, the great use of poetry to mankind and society, and in every employment of life. Upon these views, I cannot but commend your wise resolution to withdraw so early from other unprofitable and severe studies, and betake yourself to that, which, if you have good luck, will advance your fortune, and make you an ornament to your friends and your country. It may be your justification, and farther encouragement, to consider, that history, ancient or modern, cannot furnish you an instance of one person, eminent in any station, who was

not in some measure versed in poetry, or at least a well-wisher to the professors of it. Neither would I despair to prove, if legally called thereto, that it is impossible to be a good soldier, divine, or lawyer, or even so much as an eminent bell-man, or ballad-singer, without some taste of poetry, and a competent skill in versification. But I say the less of this, because the renowned Sir Philip Sidney has exhausted the subject before me, in his "Defence of Poesie," on which I shall make no other remark but this, that he argues there as if he really believed himself.

For my own part, having never made one verse since I was at school, where I suffered too much for my blunders in poetry to have any love to it ever since, I am not able, from any experience of my own, to give you those instructions you desire; neither will I declare (for I love to conceal my passions) how much I lament my neglect of poetry in those periods of my life which were properest for improvements in that ornamental part of learning; besides, my age and infirmities might well excuse me to you, as being unqualified to be your writing-master, with spectacles on, and a shaking hand. However, that I may not be altogether wanting to you in an affair of so much importance to your credit and happiness, I shall here give you some scattered thoughts upon the subject, such as I have gathered by reading and observation.

There is a certain little instrument, the first of those in use with scholars, and the meanest,

considering the materials of it, whether it be a joint of wheaten straw (the old Arcadian pipe), or just three inches of slender wire, or a stripped feather, or a corking-pin. Furthermore, this same diminutive tool, for the posture of it, usually reclines its head on the thumb of the right hand, sustains the foremost finger upon its breast, and is itself supported by the second. This is commonly known by the name of a FESCUE; I shall here therefore condescend to be this little elementary guide, and point out some particulars which may be of use to you in your hornbook of poetry.

In the first place, I am not yet convinced, that it is at all necessary for a modern poet to believe in God, or have any serious sense of religion; and in this article you must give me leave to suspect your capacity; because religion being what your mother taught you, you will hardly find it possible, at least not easy, all at once to get over those early prejudices, so far as to think it better to be a great wit than a good Christian, though herein the general practice is against you; so that if, upon enquiry, you find in yourself any such softness, owing to the nature of your education, my advice is, that you forthwith lay down your pen, as having no further business with it in the way of poetry; unless you will be content to pass for an insipid, or will submit to be hooted at by your fraternity, or can disguise your religion, as well-bred men do their learning, in complaisance to company.

For poetry, as it has been managed for some years past, by such as make a business of it (and of such only I speak here; for I do not call him a poet that writes for his diversion, any more than that gentleman a fiddler, who amuses himself with a violin), I say our poetry of late has been altogether disengaged from the narrow notions of virtue and piety, because it has been found by experience of our professors, that the smallest quantity of religion, like a single drop of malt liquor in claret, will muddy and discompose the brightest poetical genius.

Religion supposes heaven and hell, the word of God, and sacraments, and twenty other circumstances, which, taken seriously, are a wonderful check to wit and humour, and such as a true poet cannot possibly give in to, with a saving to his poetical licence; but yet it is necessary for him, that others should believe those things seriously, that his wit may be exercised on their wisdom, for so doing: For though a wit need not have religion, religion is necessary to a wit, as an instrument is to the hand that plays upon it: And for this the moderns plead the example of their great idol Lucretius, who had not been by half so eminent a poet (as he truly was), but that he stood tiptoe on religion, *Religio pedibus subjecta*, and by that rising ground had the advantage of all the poets of his own or following times, who were not mounted on the same pedestal.

Besides, it is further to be observed, that Petronius, another of their favourites, speaking

of the qualifications of a good poet, insists chiefly on the *liber spiritus;* by which I have been ignorant enough heretofore to suppose he meant, a good invention, or great compass of thought, or a sprightly imagination: But I have learned a better construction, from the opinion and practice of the modern; and taking it literally for a free spirit, *i.e.*, a spirit, or mind, free or disengaged from all prejudices concerning God, religion, and another world, it is to me a plain account why our present set of poets are, and hold themselves obliged to be, freethinkers.

But although I cannot recommend religion upon the practice of some of our most eminent English poets, yet I can justly advise you, from their example, to be conversant in the Scriptures, and, if possible, to make yourself entirely master of them: In which, however, I intend nothing less than imposing upon you a task of piety. Far be it from me to desire you to believe them, or lay any great stress upon their authority (in that you may do as you think fit), but to read them as a piece of necessary furniture for a wit and a poet; which is a very different view from that of a Christian. For I have made it my observation, that the greatest wits have been the best textuaries. Our modern poets are, all to a man, almost as well read in the Scriptures as some of our divines, and often abound more with the phrase. They have read them historically, critically, musically, comically, poetically, and every other way except religiously, and have found

their account in doing so. For the Scriptures are undoubtedly a fund of wit, and a subject for wit. You may, according to the modern practice, be witty upon them or out of them: and, to speak the truth, but for them I know not what our playwrights would do for images, allusions, similitudes, examples, or even language itself. Shut up the sacred books, and I would be bound our wit would run down like an alarum, or fall as the stocks did, and ruin half the poets in these kingdoms. And if that were the case, how would most of that tribe (all, I think, but the immortal Addison, who made a better use of his Bible, and a few more), who dealt so freely in that fund, rejoice that they had drawn out in time, and left the present generation of poets to be the bubbles!

But here I must enter one caution, and desire you to take notice, that in this advice of reading the Scriptures, I had not the least thought concerning your qualification that way for poetical orders; which I mention, because I find a notion of that kind advanced by one of our English poets, and is, I suppose, maintained by the rest. He says to Spenser, in a pretended vision:

—With hands laid on, ordain me fit
For the great cure and ministry of wit.

Which passage is, in my opinion, a notable allusion to the Scriptures; and, making (but reasonable) allowances for the small circumstance of profaneness, bordering close upon blasphemy, is inimi-

tably fine; besides some useful discoveries made in it, as, that there are bishops in poetry, that these bishops must ordain young poets, and with laying-on hands; and that poetry is a cure of souls; and, consequently speaking, those who have such cures ought to be poets, and too often are so. And indeed, as of old poets and priests were one and the same function, the alliance of those ministerial offices is to this day happily maintained in the same persons; and this I take to be the only justifiable reason for that appellation which they so much affect, I mean the modest title of divine poets. However, having never been present at the ceremony of ordaining to the priesthood of poetry, I own I have no notion of the thing, and shall say the less of it here.

The Scriptures then being generally both the fountain and subject of modern wit, I could do no less than give them the preference in your reading. After a thorough acquaintance with them, I would advise you to turn your thoughts to human literature, which yet I say more in compliance with vulgar opinions, than according to my own sentiments.

For, indeed, nothing has surprised me more, than to see the prejudices of mankind as to this matter of human learning, who have generally thought it necessary to be a good scholar in order to be a good poet; than which nothing is falser in fact, or more contrary to practice and experience. Neither will I dispute the matter, if any

man will undertake to shew me one professed poet now in being, who is anything of what may be justly called a scholar; or is the worse poet for that, but perhaps the better, for being so little encumbered with the pedantry of learning. 'Tis true, the contrary was the opinion of our forefathers, which we of this age have devotion enough to receive from them on their own terms, and unexamined, but not sense enough to perceive 'twas a gross mistake in them. So Horace has told us:

> Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons.
> Rem tibi Socraticae poterunt ostendere chartae*
>
> Hor. *de Art. Poet* 309.

But to see the different casts of men's heads, some, not inferior to that poet in understanding (if you will take their own word for it), do see no consequence in this rule, and are not ashamed to declare themselves of a contrary opinion. Do not many men write well in common account, who have nothing of that principle? Many are too wise to be poets, and others too much poets to be wise. Must a man, forsooth, be no less than a philosopher, to be a poet, when it is plain that some of the greatest idiots of the age are

* The origin and source of correct writing is good sense: (*or* to be wise) the Socratic literature can supply you with subject-matter.

our prettiest performers that way? And for this, I appeal to the judgment and observation of mankind. Sir Philip Sidney's notable remark upon this nation may not be improper to mention here. He says, "In our neighbour country Ireland, where true learning goes very bare, yet are their poets held in devout reverence"; which shews, that learning is no way necessary either to the making of a poet or judging of him. And further to see the fate of things, notwithstanding our learning here is as bare as ever, yet are our poets not held, as formerly, in devout reverence, but are perhaps, the most contemptible race of mortals now in this kingdom, which is no less to be wondered at, than lamented.

Some of the old philosophers were poets (as, according to the forementioned author, Socrates and Plato were; which, however, is what I did not know before), but that does not say, that all poets are, or that any need be, philosophers, otherwise than as those are so called who are a little out at the elbows. In which sense the great Shakespeare might have been a philosopher; but was no scholar, yet was an excellent poet. Neither do I think a late most judicious critic so much mistaken, as others do, in advancing this opinion, that "Shakespeare had been a worse poet, had he been a better scholar"; And Sir William Davenant is another instance in the same kind. Nor must it be forgotten, that Plato was an avowed enemy to poets; which is perhaps the reason why poets have been always at enmity

with his profession; and have rejected all learning and philosophy for the sake of that one philosopher. As I take the matter, neither philosophy, nor any part of learning, is more necessary to poetry (which, if you will believe the same author, is "the sum of all learning") than to know the theory of light, and the several proportions and diversifications of it in particular colours, is to a good painter.

Whereas therefore, a certain author, called Petronius Arbiter, going upon the same mistake, has confidently declared, that one ingredient of a good poet, is, "*mens ingenti literarum flumine inundata*"; I do, on the contrary, declare, that this his assertion (to speak of it in the softest terms) is no better than an invidious and unhandsome reflection on all the gentlemen-poets of these times; for, with his good leave, much less than a flood, or inundation, will serve the turn; and, to my certain knowledge, some of our greatest wits in your poetical way, have not as much real learning as would cover a sixpence in the bottom of a basin; nor do I think the worse of them. For, to speak my private opinion, I am for every man's working upon his own materials, and producing only what he can find within himself, which is commonly a better stock than the owner knows it to be. I think flowers of wit ought to spring, as those in a garden do, from their own root and stem, without foreign assistance. I would have a man's wit rather like a fountain, that feeds itself invisibly, than a river,

that is supplied by several streams from abroad.

Or, if it be necessary, as the case is with some barren wits, to take in the thoughts of others, in order to draw forth their own, as dry pumps will not play till water is thrown into them; in that necessity, I would recommend some of the approved standard authors of antiquity for your perusal, as a poet and a wit; because maggots being what you look for, as monkeys do for vermin in their keepers' heads, you will find they abound in good old authors, as in rich old cheese, not in the new; and for that reason you must have the classics, especially the most worm-eaten of them, often in your hands.

But with this caution, that you are not to use those ancients, as unlucky lads do their old fathers, and make no conscience of picking their pockets and pillaging them. Your business is not to steal from them, but to improve upon them, and make their sentiments your own; which is an effect of great judgment; and though difficult, yet very possible, without the scurvy imputation of filching. For I humbly conceive, though I light my candle at my neighbour's fire, that does not alter the property or make the wick, the wax, or the flame, or the whole candle, less my own.

Possibly you may think it a very severe task, to arrive at a competent knowledge of so many of the ancients, as excel in their way; and indeed it would be really so, but for the short and easy method lately found out of abstracts, abridgments,

summaries, etc., which are admirable expedients for being very learned with little or no reading; and have the same use with burning-glasses, to collect the diffused rays of wit and learning in authors, and make them point with warmth and quickness upon the reader's imagination. And to this is nearly related that other modern device of consulting indexes, which is to read books hebraically, and begin where others usually end; and this is a compendious way of coming to an acquaintance with authors. For authors are to be used like lobsters, you must look for the best meat in the tails, and lay the bodies back again in the dish. Your cunningest thieves (and what else are readers, who only read to borrow, *i.e.*, to steal) use to cut off the portmanteau from behind, without staying to dive into the pockets of the owner. Lastly, you are taught thus much in the very elements of philosophy, for one of the first rules in logic is, *Finis est primus in intentione*.

The learned world is therefore most highly indebted to a late painful and judicious editor of the classics, who has laboured in that new way with exceeding felicity. Every author, by his management, sweats under himself, being overloaded with his own index, and carries, like a north-country pedlar, all his substance and furniture upon his back, and with as great variety of trifles. To him let all young students make their compliments for so much time and pains saved in the pursuit of useful knowledge; for

whoever shortens a road, is a benefactor to the public, and to every particular person who has occasion to travel that way.

But to proceed. I have lamented nothing more in my time, than the disuse of some ingenious little plays, in fashion with young folks when I was a boy, and to which the great facility of that age, above ours, in composing was certainly owing; and if anything has brought a damp upon the versification of these times, we have no further than this to go for the cause of it. Now, could these sports be happily revived, I am of opinion your wisest course would be to apply your thoughts to them, and never fail to make a party when you can, in those profitable diversions. For example, 'Crambo' is of extraordinary use to good rhyming, and rhyming is what I have ever accounted the very essential of a good poet: And in that notion I am not singular; for the aforesaid Sir Philip Sidney has declared, "That the chief life of modern versifying, consisteth in the like sounding of words, which we call rhyme," which is an authority, either without exception, or above any reply. Wherefore, you are ever to try a good poem as you would a sound pipkin, and if it rings well upon the knuckle, be sure there is no flaw in it. Verse without rhyme, is a body without a soul (for the "chief life consisteth in the rhyme") or a bell without a clapper; which, in strictness, is no bell, as being neither of use nor delight. And the same ever honoured knight, with so musical an ear, had that veneration for the tunableness

and chiming of verse, that he speaks of a poet as one that has "the reverend title of a rhymer." Our celebrated Milton has done these nations great prejudice in this particular, having spoiled as many reverend rhymers, by his example, as he has made real poets.

For which reason, I am overjoyed to hear, that a very ingenious youth of this town is now upon the useful design (for which he is never enough to be commended) of bestowing rhyme upon Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which will make the poem, in that only defective, more heroic and sonorous than it has hitherto been. I wish the gentleman success in the performance; and, as it is a work in which a young man could not be more happily employed, or appear in with greater advantage to his character, so I am concerned that it did not fall out to be your province.

With much the same view, I would recommend to you the witty play of "Pictures and Mottoes," which will furnish your imagination with great store of images and suitable devices. We of these kingdoms have found our account in this diversion, as little as we consider or acknowledge it. For to this we owe our eminent felicity in posies of rings, mottoes of snuff-boxes, the humours of sign-posts with their elegant inscriptions, etc., in which kind of productions not any nation in the world, no, not the Dutch themselves, will presume to rival us.

For much the same reason it may be proper for you to have some insight into the play called

"What is it like?" as of great use in common practice, to quicken slow capacities, and improve the quickest; but the chief end of it is, to supply the fancy with variety of similes for all subjects. It will teach you to bring things to a likeness, which have not the least imaginable conformity in nature, which is properly creation, and the very business of a poet, as his name implies; and let me tell you, a good poet can no more be without a stock of similes by him, than a shoemaker without his lasts. He should have them sized, and ranged, and hung up in order in his shop, ready for all customers, and shaped to the feet of all sorts of verse. And here I could more fully (and I long to do it) insist upon the wonderful harmony and resemblance between a poet and a shoemaker, in many circumstances common to both; such as the binding of their temples, the stuff they work upon, and the paring-knife they use, etc., but that I would not digress, nor seem to trifle in so serious a matter.

Now, I say, if you apply yourself to these diminutive sports (not to mention others of equal ingenuity, such as Draw-gloves, Cross purposes, Questions and commands, and the rest), it is not to be conceived what benefit (of nature) you will find by them, and how they will open the body of your invention. To these devote your spare hours, or rather spare all your hours to them, and then you will act as becomes a wise man, and make even diversions an improvement; like the inimitable management of the bee, which does

the whole business of life at once, and at the same time both feeds, and works, and diverts itself.

Your own prudence will, I doubt not, direct you to take a place every evening amongst the ingenious, in the corner of a certain coffee-house in this town, where you will receive a turn equally right as to wit, religion, and politics: As likewise to be as frequent at the playhouse as you can afford without selling your books. For, in our chaste theatre, even Cato himself might sit to the falling of the curtain: Besides, you will sometimes meet with tolerable conversation amongst the players; they are such a kind of men as may pass, upon the same sort of capacities, for wits off the stage, as they do for fine gentlemen upon it. Besides that, I have known a factor deal in as good ware, and sell as cheap as the merchant himself that employs him.

Add to this the expediency of furnishing out your shelves with a choice collection of modern miscellanies, in the gayest edition; and of reading all sorts of plays, especially the new, and above all, those of our own growth, printed by subscription; in which article of Irish manufacture, I readily agree to the late proposal, and am altogether for "rejecting and renouncing everything that comes from England"; To what purpose should we go thither for coals or poetry, when we have a vein within ourselves equally good and more convenient? Lastly,

A common-place book is what a provident poet cannot subsist without, for this proverbial reason,

that "great wits have short memories" and whereas, on the other hand, poets being liars by profession, ought to have good memories. To reconcile these, a book of this sort is in the nature of a supplemental memory, or a record of what occurs remarkable in every day's reading or conversation. There you enter not only your own original thoughts (which, a hundred to one, are few and insignificant), but such of other men as you think fit to make your own by entering them there. For take this for a rule, when an author is in your books, you have the same demand upon him for his wit, as a merchant has for your money, when you are in his.

By these few and easy prescriptions (with the help of a good genius), 'tis possible you may in a short time arrive at the accomplishments of a poet, and shine in that character. As for your manner of composing, and choice of subjects, I cannot take upon me to be your director; but I will venture to give you some short hints, which you may enlarge upon at your leisure. Let me entreat you, then, by no means to lay aside that notion peculiar to our modern refiners in poetry, which is, that a poet must never write or discourse as the ordinary part of mankind do, but in number and verse, as an oracle; which I mention the rather, because upon this principle, I have known heroics brought into the pulpit, and a whole sermon composed and delivered in blank verse, to the vast credit of the preacher, no less than the real entertainment and great edification of the

audience. The secret of which I take to be this. When the matter of such discourses is but mere clay, or, as we usually call it, sad stuff, the preacher who can afford no better wisely moulds, and polishes, and dries, and washes this piece of earthenware, and then bakes it with poetic fire; after which it will ring like any pancrock, and is a good dish to set before common guests, as every congregation is, that comes so often for entertainment to one place.

There was a good old custom in use, which our ancestors had, of invoking the Muses at the entrance of their poems; I suppose by way of craving a blessing. This the graceless moderns have in a great measure laid aside, but are not to be followed in that poetical impiety; for although to nice ears such invocations may sound harsh and disagreeable (as tuning instruments is before a concert), they are equally necessary. Again, you must not fail to dress your muse in a forehead cloth of Greek or Latin; I mean, you are always to make use of a quaint motto to all your compositions; for, besides that this artifice bespeaks the reader's opinion of the writer's learning, it is otherwise useful and commendable. A bright passage in the front of a poem is a good mark, like a star in a horse's face, and the piece will certainly go off the better for it. The *os magna sonaturum*, which, if I remember right, Horace makes one qualification of a good poet, may teach you not to gag your muse, or stint yourself in words and epithets (which cost you

nothing) contrary to the practice of some few out-of-the-way writers, who use a natural and concise expression, and affect a style like unto a Shrewsbury cake, short and sweet upon the palate; they will not afford you a word more than is necessary to make them intelligible, which is as poor and niggardly as it would be to set down no more meat than your company will be sure to eat up. Words are but lackeys to sense, and will dance attendance without wages or compulsion; *Verba non invita sequentur.*

Farthermore, when you set about composing, it may be necessary, for your ease and better distillation of wit, to put on your worst clothes, and the worse the better; for an author, like a limbeck, will yield the better for having a rag about him. Besides that, I have observed a gardener cut the outward rind of a tree (which is the surtout of it), to make it bear well: And this is a natural account of the usual poverty of poets, and is an argument why wits, of all men living, ought to be ill clad. I have always a secret veneration for any one I observe to be a little out of repair in his person, as supposing him either a poet or philosopher; because the richest minerals are ever found under the most ragged and withered surface of earth.

As for your choice of subjects, I have only to give you this caution: That as a handsome way of praising is certainly the most difficult point in writing or speaking, I would by no means advise any young man to make his first essay in pane-

gyric, besides the danger of it: for a particular encomium is ever attended with more ill-will, than any general invective, for which I need give no reasons; wherefore, my counsel is, that you use the point of your pen, not the feather; let your first attempt be a *coup d'éclat* in the way of libel, lampoon, or satire. Knock down half a score reputations, and you will infallibly raise your own; and so it be with wit, no matter with how little justice; for fiction is your trade.

Every great genius seems to ride upon mankind, like Pyrrhus on his elephant; and the way to have the absolute ascendant of your resty nag, and to keep your seat is, at your first mounting, to afford him the whip and spurs plentifully; after which, you may travel the rest of the day with great alacrity. Once kick the world, and the world and you will live together at a reasonable good understanding. You cannot but know, that those of your profession have been called *genus irritabile vatum;* and you will find it necessary to qualify yourself for that waspish society, by exerting your talent of satire upon the first occasion, and to abandon good nature, only to prove yourself a true poet, which you will allow to be a valuable consideration: In a word, a young robber is usually entered by a murder: A young hound is blooded when he comes first into the field: A young bully begins with killing his man: And a young poet must shew his wit, as the other his courage, by cutting and slashing, and laying about him, and banging mankind. Lastly,

It will be your wisdom to look out betimes for a good service for your muse, according to her skill and qualifications, whether in the nature of a dairymaid, a cook, or a charwoman. I mean, to hire out your pen to a party, which will afford you both pay and protection; and when you have to do with the press (as you will long to be there), take care to bespeak an importunate friend, to extort your productions with an agreeable violence; and which, according to the cue between you, you must surrender *digito male pertinaci*. There is a decency in this; for it no more becomes an author, in modesty, to have a hand in publishing his own works, than a woman in labour to lay herself.

I would be very loth to give the least umbrage or offence by what I have here said, as I may do, if I should be thought to insinuate that these circumstances of good writing have been unknown to, or not observed by, the poets of this kingdom. I will do my countrymen the justice to say, they have written by the foregoing rules with great exactness, and so far as hardly to come behind those of their profession in England, in perfection of low writing. The sublime, indeed, is not so common with us; but ample amends is made for that want, in great abundance of the admirable and amazing, which appears in all our compositions. Our very good friend (the knight aforesaid), speaking of the force of poetry, mentions "rhyming to death, which" (adds he) "is said to be done in Ireland"; and

truly, to our honour be it spoken, that power, in a great measure, continues with us to this day.

I would now offer some poor thoughts of mine for the encouragement of poetry in this kingdom, if I could hope they would be agreeable. I have had many an aching heart for the ill plight of that noble profession here, and it has been my late and early study how to bring it into better circumstances. And surely, considering what monstrous wits, in the poetic way, do almost daily start up and surprise us in this town; what prodigious geniuses we have here (of which I could give instances without number), and withal of what great benefit it might be to our trade to encourage that science here (for it is plain our linen manufacture is advanced by the great waste of paper made by our present set of poets, not to mention other necessary uses of the same to shop-keepers, especially grocers, apothecaries, and pastry-cooks; and I might add, but for our writers, the nation would in a little time be utterly destitute of bumfodder, and must of necessity import the same from England and Holland, where they have it in great abundance, by the indefatigable labour of their own wits), I say, these things considered, I am humbly of opinion, it would be worth the care of our governors to cherish gentlemen of the quill, and give them all proper encouragements here. And since I am upon the subject, I shall speak my mind very freely, and if I add, saucily, it is no more than my birthright as a Briton.

Seriously then, I have many years lamented the want of a Grub Street in this our large and polite city, unless the whole may be called one. And this I have accounted an unpardonable defect in our constitution, ever since I had any opinions I could call my own. Every one knows Grub Street is a market for small ware in wit, and as necessary, considering the usual purgings of the human brain, as the nose is upon a man's face. And for the same reason we have here a court, a college, a play-house, and beautiful ladies, and fine gentlemen, and good claret, and abundance of pens, ink, and paper (clear of taxes), and every other circumstance to provoke wit; and yet those whose province it is, have not yet thought fit to appoint a place for evacuations of it, which is a very hard case, as may be judged by comparisons.

And truly this defect has been attended with unspeakable inconveniences; for not to mention the prejudice done to the commonwealth of letters, I am of opinion we suffer in our health by it. I believe our corrupted air, and frequent thick fogs, are in a great measure owing to the common exposal of our wit; and that, with good management, our poetical vapours might be carried off in a common drain, and fall into one quarter of the town, without infecting the whole, as the case is at present, to the great offence of our nobility, and gentry, and others of nice noses. When writers of all sizes, like freemen of the city, are at liberty to throw out their filth and

excrementitious productions, in every street as they please, what can the consequence be, but that the town must be poisoned, and become such another jakes, as, by report of great travellers, Edinburgh is at night, a thing well to be considered in these pestilential times.

I am not of the society for reformation of manners, but, without that pragmatical title, I would be glad to see some amendment in the matter before us. Wherefore I humbly bespeak the favour of the Lord Mayor, the Court of Aldermen, and Common Council, together with the whole circle of arts in this town, and do recommend this affair to their most political consideration; and I persuade myself they will not be wanting in their best endeavours, when they can serve two such good ends at once, as both to keep the town sweet, and encourage poetry in it. Neither do I make any exceptions as to satirical poets and lampoon writers, in consideration of their office. For though, indeed, their business is to rake into kennels, and gather up the filth of streets and families (in which respect they may be, for aught I know, as necessary to the town as scavengers or chimney-sweeps), yet I have observed they too have themselves, at the same time, very foul clothes, and, like dirty persons, leave more filth and nastiness than they sweep away.

In a word: What I would be at (for I love to be plain in matters of importance, to my country), is that some private street, or blind

alley, of this town, may be fitted up at the charge of the public as an apartment for the Muses (like those at Rome and Amsterdam, for their female relations), and be wholly consigned to the uses of our wits, furnished completely with all appurtenances, such as authors, supervisors, presses, printers, hawkers, shops, and warehouses, abundance of garrets, and every other implement and circumstance of wit; the benefit of which would obviously be this, *viz.*, That we should then have a safe repository for our best productions, which at present are handed about in single sheets or manuscripts, and may be altogether lost (which were a pity), or at best are subject, in that loose dress, like handsome women, to great abuse.

Another point that has cost me some melancholy reflections is the present state of the playhouse; the encouragement of which hath an immediate influence upon the poetry of the kingdom; as a good market improves the tillage of the neighbouring country, and enriches the ploughman. Neither do we of this town seem enough to know or consider the vast benefit of a playhouse to our city and nation: That single house is the fountain of all our love, wit, dress, and gallantry. It is the school of wisdom; for there we learn to know what's what; which, however, I cannot say is always in that place sound knowledge. There our young folks drop their childish mistakes, and come first to perceive their mothers' cheat of the parsley-bed; there too

they get rid of natural prejudices, especially those of religion and modesty, which are great restraints to a free people. The same is a remedy for the spleen, and blushing, and several distempers occasioned by the stagnation of the blood. It is likewise a school of common swearing; my young master, who at first but minced an oath, is taught there to mouth it gracefully, and to swear, as he reads French, *ore rotundo*. Profaneness was before to him in the nature of his best suit, or holiday clothes; but upon frequenting the playhouse, swearing, cursing, and lying, become like his every-day coat, waistcoat, and breeches. Now, I say, common swearing, a produce of this country, as plentiful as our corn, thus cultivated by the playhouse, might, with management, be of wonderful advantage to the nation, as a projector of the swearer's bank has proved at large. Lastly, the stage in great measure supports the pulpit; for I know not what our divines could have to say there against the corruptions of the age, but for the playhouse, which is the seminary of them. From which it is plain, the public is a gainer by the playhouse, and consequently ought to countenance it; and, were I worthy to put in my word, or prescribe to my betters, I could say in what manner.

I have heard that a certain gentleman has great designs to serve the public, in the way of their diversions, with due encouragement; that is, if he can obtain some concordatum-money, or yearly salary, and handsome contributions.

And well he deserves the favours of the nation; for, to do him justice, he has an uncommon skill in pastimes, having altogether applied his studies that way, and travelled full many a league, by sea and land, for this his profound knowledge. With that view alone he has visited all the courts and cities in Europe, and has been at more pains than I shall speak of, to take an exact draught of the playhouse at the Hague, as a model for a new one here. But what can a private man do by himself in so public an undertaking? It is not to be doubted but by his care and industry vast improvements may be made, not only in our playhouse (which is his immediate province), but in our gaming ordinaries, groom-porters, lotteries, bowling-greens, ninepin-alleys, bear-gardens, cockpits, prizes, puppets and raree shows, and whatever else concerns the elegant divertisements of this town. He is truly an original genius, and I felicitate this our capital city on his residence here, where I wish him long to live and flourish, for the good of the commonwealth.

Once more: If any further application shall be made on t'other side, to obtain a charter for a bank here, I presume to make a request, that *poetry* may be a sharer in that privilege, being a fund as real, and to the full as well grounded as our stocks; but I fear our neighbours, who envy our wit, as much as they do our wealth or trade, will give no encouragement to either. I believe, also, it might be proper to erect a corporation

of poets in this city. I have been idle enough in my time, to make a computation of wits here, and do find we have three hundred performing poets and upwards, in and about this town, reckoning six score to the hundred, and allowing for demies, like pint bottles; including also the several denominations of imitators, translators, and familiar-letter-writers, etc. One of these last has lately entertained the town with original piece, and such a one as, I dare say, the late British "Spectator," in his decline, would have called, "an excellent specimen of the true sublime," or, "a noble poëm," or, "a fine copy of verses, on a subject perfectly new," (the author himself) and had given it a place amongst his latest "Lucubrations."

But, as I was saying, so many poets, I am confident, are sufficient to furnish out a corporation in point of number. Then, for the several degrees of subordinate members requisite to such a body, there can be no want; for, although we have not one masterly poet, yet we abound with wardens and beadles, having a multitude of poetasters, poetitoes, parcel-poets, poet-apes, and philo-poets, and many of inferior attainments in wit, but strong inclination to it, which are by odds more than all the rest. Nor shall I ever be at ease, till this project of mine (for which I am heartily thankful to myself) shall be reduced to practice. I long to see the day, when our poets will be a regular and distinct body, and wait upon the Lord Mayor on public days, like other

good citizens, in gowns turned up with green, instead of laurels; and when I myself, who make this proposal, shall be free of their company.

To conclude: What if our government had a poet-laureate here, as in England? What if our university had a professor of poetry here, as in England? What if our Lord Mayor had a city bard here, as in England? And, to refine upon England, what if every corporation, parish, and ward in this town, had a poet in fee, as they have *not* in England? Lastly; What if every one so qualified were obliged to add one more than usual to the number of his domestics, and, besides a fool and a chaplain (which are often united in one person), would retain a poet in his family? For, perhaps, a rhymer is as necessary amongst servants of a house, as a Dobbin with his bells at the head of a team. But these things I leave to the wisdom of my superiors.

While I have been directing your pen, I should not forget to govern my own, which has already exceeded the bounds of a letter. I must therefore take my leave abruptly, and desire you, without farther ceremony, to believe that I am,

SIR,

Your most humble servant.

OF THE UNION AND INTERNAL PROSPERITY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE AGE OF THE ANTONINES

It is not alone by the rapidity or extent of conquest that we should estimate the greatness of Rome. The sovereign of the Russian deserts commands a larger portion of the globe. In the seventh summer after his passage of the Hellespont, Alexander erected the Macedonian trophies on the banks of the Hyphasis. Within less than a century, the irresistible Zingis, and the Mogul princes of his race, spread their cruel devastations and transient empire from the sea of China to the confines of Egypt and Germany. But the firm edifice of Roman power was raised and preserved by the wisdom of ages. The obedient provinces of Trajan and the Antonines were united by laws and adorned by arts. They might occasionally suffer from the partial abuse of delegated authority; but the general principle of government was wise, simple, and beneficent. They enjoyed the religion of their ancestors, whilst in civil honours and advantages they were exalted, by just degrees, to an equality with their conquerors.

I. The policy of the emperors and the senate, as far as it concerned religion, was happily seconded by the reflections of the enlightened, and by the habits of the superstitious, part of their

subjects. The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful. And thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord.

The superstition of the people was not embittered by any mixture of theological rancour: nor was it confined by the chains of any speculative system. The devout polytheist, though fondly attached to his national rites, admitted with implicit faith the different religions of the earth. Fear, gratitude, and curiosity, a dream or an omen, a singular disorder or a distant journey, perpetually disposed him to multiply the articles of his belief, and to enlarge the list of his protectors. The thin texture of the Pagan mythology was interwoven with various, but not discordant materials. As soon as it was allowed that sages and heroes, who had lived or who had died for the benefit of their country, were exalted to a state of power and immortality, it was universally confessed that they deserved, if not the adoration, at least the reverence of all mankind. The deities of a thousand groves and a thousand streams possessed, in peace, their local and respective influence nor could the Roman who deprecated the wrath of the Tiber deride the Egyptian who presented his offering to the beneficent genius of the Nile. The visible powers of Nature, the planets, and the elements, were the same throughout the universe. The invisible governors of the moral

world were inevitably cast in a similar mould of fiction and allegory. Every virtue, and even vice, acquired its divine representative; every art and profession its patron, whose attributes, in the most distant ages and countries, were uniformly derived from the character of their peculiar votaries. A republic of gods of such opposite tempers and interests required, in every system, the moderating hand of a supreme magistrate, who, by the progress of knowledge and flattery, was gradually invested with the sublime perfections of an Eternal Parent and an Omnipotent Monarch. Such was the mild spirit of antiquity, that the nations were less attentive to the difference, than to the resemblance of their religious worship. The Greek, the Roman, and the Barbarian, as they met before their respective altars, easily persuaded themselves that, under various names and with various ceremonies, they adored the same deities. The elegant mythology of Homer gave a beautiful, and almost a regular form to the polytheism of the ancient world.

The philosophers of Greece deduced their morals from the nature of man, rather than from that of God. They meditated, however, on the Divine Nature as a very curious and important speculation; and in the profound inquiry they displayed the strength and weakness of the human understanding. Of the four most celebrated schools, the Stoics and the Platonists endeavoured to reconcile the jarring interests of reason and piety. They have left us the most sublime proofs of the

existence and perfections of the first cause; but, as it was impossible for them to conceive the creation of matter, the workman in the Stoic philosophy was not sufficiently distinguished from the work; whilst, on the contrary, the Spiritual God of Plato and his disciples resembled an idea rather than a substance. The opinions of the Academics and Epicureans were of a less religious cast; but whilst the modest science of the former induced them to doubt, the positive ignorance of the latter urged them to deny, the providence of a Supreme Ruler. The spirit of inquiry, prompted by emulation and supported by freedom, had divided the public teachers of philosophy into a variety of contending sects; but the ingenuous youth, who, from every part, resorted to Athens and the other seats of learning in the Roman empire, were alike instructed in every school to reject and to despise the religion of the multitude. How, indeed, was it possible that a philosopher should accept as divine truths the idle tales of the poets, and the incoherent traditions of antiquity; or that he should adore as gods those imperfect beings whom he must have despised as men? Against such unworthy adversaries Cicero condescended to employ the arms of reason and eloquence; but the satire of Lucian was a much more adequate, as well as more efficacious weapon. We may be well assured that a writer conversant with the world would never have ventured to expose the gods of his country to public ridicule, had they not already been the objects of secret

contempt among the polished and enlightened orders of society. Notwithstanding the fashionable irreligion which prevailed in the age of the Antonines, both the interest of the priests and the credulity of the people were sufficiently respected. In their writings and conversation the philosophers of antiquity asserted the independent dignity of reason; but they resigned their actions to the commands of law and of custom. Viewing with a smile of pity and indulgence the various errors of the vulgar, they diligently practised the ceremonies of their fathers, devoutly frequented the temples of the gods, and, sometimes condescending to act a part on the theatre of superstition, they concealed the sentiments of an Atheist under the sacerdotal robes. Reasoners of such a temper were scarcely inclined to wrangle about their respective modes of faith or of worship. It was indifferent to them what shape the folly of the multitude might choose to assume; and they approached, with the same inward contempt and the same external reverence, the altars of the Libyan, the Olympian, or the Capitoline Jupiter.

It is not easy to conceive from what motives a spirit of persecution could introduce itself into the Roman councils. The magistrates could not be actuated by a blind though honest bigotry, since the magistrates were themselves philosophers; and the schools of Athens had given laws to the senate. They could not be impelled by ambition or avarice, as the temporal and ecclesiastical

powers were united in the same hands. The pontiffs were chosen among the most illustrious of the senators; and the office of Supreme Pontiff was constantly exercised by the emperors themselves. They knew and valued the advantages of religion, as it is connected with civil government. They encouraged the public festivals which humanize the manners of the people. They managed the arts of divination as a convenient instrument of policy; and they respected, as the firmest bond of society, the useful persuasion, that, either in this, or in a future life, the crime of perjury is most assuredly punished by the avenging gods. But, whilst they acknowledged the general advantages of religion, they were convinced that the various modes of worship contributed alike to the same salutary purposes; and that, in every country, the form of superstition which had received the sanction of time and experience was the best adapted to the climate and to its inhabitants. Avarice and taste very frequently despoiled the vanquished nations of the elegant statues of their gods and the rich ornaments of their temples; but, in the exercise of the religion which they derived from their ancestors, they uniformly experienced the indulgence, and even protection, of the Roman conquerors. The province of Gaul seems, and indeed only seems, an exception to this universal toleration. Under the specious pretext of abolishing human sacrifices, the emperors Tiberius and Claudius suppressed the dangerous power of the

Druids: but the priests themselves, their gods, and their altars, subsisted in peaceful obscurity till the final destruction of Paganism.

Rome, the capital of the great monarchy, was incessantly filled with subjects and strangers from every part of the world, who all introduced and enjoyed the favourite superstitions of their native country. Every city in the empire was justified in maintaining the purity of its ancient ceremonies; and the Roman senate, using the common privilege, sometimes interposed to check this inundation of foreign rites. The Egyptian superstition, of all the most contemptible and abject, was frequently prohibited; the temples of Serapis and Isis demolished, and their worshippers banished from Rome and Italy. But the zeal of fanaticism prevailed over the cold and feeble efforts of policy. The exiles returned, the proselytes multiplied, the temples were restored with increasing splendour, and Isis and Serapis at length assumed their place among the Roman deities. Nor was this indulgence a departure from the old maxims of government. In the purest ages of the commonwealth, Cybele and Asculapius had been invited by solemn embassies; and it was customary to tempt the protectors of besieged cities by the promise of more distinguished honours than they possessed in their native country. Rome gradually became the common temple of her subjects and the freedom of the city was bestowed on all the gods of mankind.

II. The narrow policy of preserving, without any foreign mixture, the pure blood of the ancient citizens, had checked the fortune and hastened the ruin of Athens and Sparta. The aspiring geinus of Rome sacrificed vanity to ambition, and deemed it more prudent, as well as honourable, to adopt virtue and merit for her own wheresoever they were found, among slaves or strangers, enemies or barbarians. During the most flourishing æra of the Athenian commonwealth the number of citizens gradually decreased from about thirty to twenty-one thousand. If, on the contrary, we study the growth of the Roman republic, we may discover that, notwithstanding the incessant demands of wars and colonies, the citizens, who, in the first census of Servius Tullius, amounted to no more than eighty-three thousand, were multiplied, before the commencement of the Social War, to the number of four hundred and sixty-three thousand men able to bear arms in the service of their country. When the allies of Rome claimed an equal share of honours and privileges, the senate indeed preferred the chance of arms to an ignominious concession. The Samnites and the Lucanians paid the severe penalty of their rashness; but the rest of the Italian states, as they successively returned to their duty, were admitted into the bosom of the republic, and soon contributed to the ruin of public freedom. Under a democratical government the citizens exercise the powers of sovereignty; and those powers will be first abused,

and afterwards lost, if they are committed to an unwieldy multitude. But when the popular assemblies had been suppressed by the administration of the emperors, the conquerors were distinguished from the vanquished nations only as the first and most honourable order of subjects; and their increase, however rapid, was no longer exposed to the same dangers. Yet the wisest princes, who adopted the maxims of Augustus, guarded with the strictest care the dignity of the Roman name, and diffused the freedom of the city with a prudent liberality.

Till the privileges of Romans had been progressively extended to all the inhabitants of the empire, an important distinction was preserved between Italy and the provinces. The former was esteemed the centre of public unity, and the firm basis of the constitution. Italy claimed the birth, or at least the residence, of the emperors and the senate. The estates of the Italians were exempt from taxes, their persons from the arbitrary jurisdiction of governors. Their municipal corporations, formed after the perfect model of the capital, were intrusted, under the immediate eye of the supreme power, with the execution of the laws. From the foot of the Alps to the extremity of Calabria all the natives of Italy were born citizens of Rome. Their partial distinctions were obliterated, and they insensibly coalesced into one great nation, united by language, manners, and civil institutions, and equal, to the weight of a powerful empire. The republic gloried in her

generous policy, and was frequently rewarded by the merit and services of her adopted sons. Had she always confined the distinction of Romans to the ancient families within the walls of the city, that immortal name would have been deprived of some of its noblest ornaments. Virgil was a native of Mantua; Horace was inclined to doubt whether he should call himself an Apulian or a Lucanian: it was in Padua that an historian was found worthy to record the majestic series of Roman victories. The patriot family of the Catos imerged from Tusculum; and the little town of Arpinum claimed the double honour of producing Marius and Cicero, the former of whom deserved, after Romulus and Camillus, to be styled the Third Founder of Rome; and the latter, after saving his country from the designs of Catiline, enabled her to contend with Athens for the palm of eloquence.

The provinces of the empire were destitute of any public force or constitutional freedom. In Etruria, in Greece, and in Gaul, it was the first care of the senate to dissolve those dangerous confederecies which taught mankind that, as the Roman arms prevailed by division, they might be resisted by union. Those princes, whom the ostentation of gratitude or generosity permitted for a while to hold a precarious sceptre, were dismissed from their thrones as soon as they had performed their appointed task of fashioning to the yoke the vanquished nations. The free states and cities which had embraced the cause of

Rome were rewarded with a nominal alliance, and insensibly sunk into real servitude. The public authority was everywhere exercised by the ministers of the senate and of the emperors, and that authority was absolute and without control. But the same salutary maxims of government, which had secured the peace and obedience of Italy, were extended to the most distant conquests. A nation of Romans was gradually formed in the provinces, by the double expedient of introducing colonies, and of admitting the most faithful and deserving of the provincials to the freedom of Rome.

"Wheresoever the Roman conquers, he inhabits," is a very just observation of Seneca, confirmed by history and experience. The natives of Italy, allured by pleasure or by interest, hastened to enjoy the advantages of victory; and we may remark, that, about forty years after the reduction of Asia, eighty thousand Romans were massacred in one day by the cruel orders of Mithridates. These voluntary exiles were engaged, for the most part, in the occupations of commerce, agriculture, and the farm of the revenue. But after the legions were rendered permanent by the emperors, the provinces were peopled by a race of soldiers; and the veterans, whether they received the reward of their service in land or in money, usually settled with their families in the country where they had honourably spent their youth. Throughout the empire, but more particularly in the western parts, the most fertile dis-

tricts, and the most convenient situations, were reserved for the establishment of colonies; some of which were of a civil, and others of a military nature. In their manners and internal policy the colonies formed a perfect representation of their great parent; and as they were soon endeared to the natives by the ties of friendship and alliance, they effectually diffused a reverence for the Roman name, and a desire, which was seldom disappointed, of sharing, in due time, its honours and advantages. The municipal cities insensibly equalled the rank and splendour of the colonies; and in the reign of Hadrian it was disputed which was the preferable condition, of those societies which had issued from, or those which had been received into, the bosom of Rome. The right of Latium, as it was called, conferred on the cities to which it had been granted a more partial favour. The magistrates only, at the expiration of their office, assumed the quality of Roman citizens; but as those offices were annual, in a few years they circulated round the principal families. Those of the provincials who were permitted to bear arms in the legions; those who exercised any civil employment; all, in a word, who performed any public service or displayed any personal talents, were rewarded with a present, whose value was continually diminished by the increasing liberality of the emperors. Yet even in the age of the Antonines, when the freedom of the city had been bestowed on the greater number of their subjects, it was still accompanied with

very solid advantages. The bulk of the people acquired, with that title, the benefit of the Roman laws, particularly in the interesting articles of marriage, testaments, and inheritances; and the road of fortune was open to those whose pretensions were seconded by favour or merit. The grandsons of the Gauls who had besieged Julius Cæsar in Alesia commanded legions, governed provinces, and were admitted into the senate of Rome. Their ambition, instead of disturbing the tranquillity of the state, was intimately connected with its safety and greatness. ✓

So sensible were the Romans of the influence of language over national manners, that it was their most serious care to extend, with the progress of their arms, the use of the Latin tongue. The ancient dialects of Italy, the Sabine, the Etruscan, and the Venetian, sunk into oblivion; but in the provinces, the East was less docile than the West to the voice of its victorious preceptors. This obvious difference marked the two portions of the empire with a distinction of colours, which, though it was in some degree concealed during the meridian splendour of prosperity, became gradually more visible as the shades of night descended upon the Roman world. The western countries were civilised by the same hands which subdued them. As soon as the barbarians were reconciled to obedience, their minds were opened to any new impressions of knowledge and politeness. The language of Virgil and Cicero, though with some inevitable mixture of corruption, was so

universally adopted in Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Pannonia, that the faint traces of the Punic or Celtic idioms were preserved only in the mountains or among the peasants. Education and study insensibly inspired the natives of those countries with the sentiments of Romans; and Italy gave fashions, as well as laws, to her Latin provincials. They solicited with more ardour, and obtained with more facility, the freedom and honours of the state; supported the national dignity in letters and in arms; and, at length, in the person of Trajan, produced an emperor whom the Scipios would not have disowned for their countryman. The situation of the Greeks was very different from that of the barbarians. The former had been long since civilized and corrupted. They had too much taste to relinquish their language, and too much vanity to adopt any foreign institutions. Still preserving the prejudices, after they had lost the virtues, of their ancestors, they affected to despise the unpolished manners of the Roman conquerors, whilst they were compelled to respect their superior wisdom and power. Nor was the influence of the Grecian language and sentiments confined to the narrow limits of that once celebrated country. Their empire, by the progress of colonies and conquest, had been diffused from the Adriatic to the Euphrates and the Nile. Asia was covered with Greek cities, and the long reign of the Macedonian kings had introduced a silent revolution into Syria and Egypt. In their pompous courts

those princes united the elegance of Athens with the luxury of the East, and the example of the court was imitated, at an humble distance, by the higher ranks of their subjects. Such was the general division of the Roman empire into the Latin and Greek languages. To these we may add a third distinction for the body of the natives in Syria, and especially in Egypt. The use of their ancient dialects, by secluding them from the commerce of mankind, checked the improvements of those barbarians. The slothful effeminacy of the former exposed them to the contempt, the sullen ferociousness of the latter excited the aversion, of the conquerors. Those nations had submitted to the Roman power, but they seldom desired or deserved the freedom of the city: and it was remarked that more than two hundred and thirty years elapsed after the ruin of the Ptolemies, before an Egyptian was admitted into the senate of Rome.

It is a just though trite observation, that victorious Rome was herself subdued by the arts of Greece. Those immortal writers who still command the admiration of modern Europe soon became the favourite object of study and imitation in Italy and the western provinces. But the elegant amusements of the Romans were not suffered to interfere with their sound maxims of policy. Whilst they acknowledged the charms of the Greek, they asserted the dignity of the Latin tongue, and the exclusive use of the latter was inflexibly maintained in the administration of civil

as well as military government. The two languages exercised at the same time their separate jurisdiction throughout the empire: the former, as the natural idiom of science; the latter, as the legal dialect of public transactions. Those who united letters with business were equally conversant with both; and it was almost impossible, in any province, to find a Roman subject, of a liberal education, who was at once a stranger to the Greek and to the Latin language.

It was by such institutions that the nations of the empire insensibly melted away into the Roman name and people. But there still remained, in the centre of every province and of every family, an unhappy condition of men who endured the weight, without sharing the benefits, of society. In the free states of antiquity the domestic slaves were exposed to the wanton rigour of despotism. The perfect settlement of the Roman empire was preceded by ages of violence and rapine. The slaves consisted, for the most part, of barbarian captives, taken in thousands by the chance of war, purchased at a vile price, accustomed to a life of independence, and impatient to break and to revenge their fetters. Against such internal enemies, whose desperate insurrections had more than once reduced the republic to the brink of destruction, the most severe regulations and the most cruel treatment seemed almost justified by the great law of self-preservation. But when the principal nations of Europe, Asia, and Africa were united under the

laws of one sovereign, the source of foreign supplies flowed with much less abundance, and the Romans were reduced to the milder but more tedious method of propagation. In their numerous families, and particularly in their country estates, they encouraged the marriage of their slaves. The sentiments of nature, the habits of education, and the possession of a dependent species of property, contributed to alleviate the hardships of servitude. The existence of a slave became an object of greater value; and though his happiness still depended on the temper and circumstances of the master, the humanity of the latter, instead of being restrained by fear, was encouraged by the sense of his own interest. The progress of manners was accelerated by the virtue or policy of the emperors; and by the edicts of Hadrian and the Antonines the protection of the laws was extended to the most abject part of mankind. The jurisdiction of life and death over the slaves, a power long exercised and often abused, was taken out of private hands, and reserved to the magistrates alone. The subterraneous prisons were abolished; and, upon a just complaint of intolerable treatment, the injured slave obtained either his deliverance or a less cruel master.

Hope, the best comfort of our imperfect condition, was not denied to the Roman slave; and if he had any opportunity of rendering himself either useful or agreeable, he might very naturally expect that the diligence and fidelity of a few

years would be rewarded with the inestimable gift of freedom. The benevolence of the master was so frequently prompted by the meaner suggestions of vanity and avarice, that the laws found it more necessary to restrain than to encourage a profuse and undistinguishing liberality, which might degenerate into a very dangerous abuse. It was a maxim of ancient jurisprudence, that a slave had not any country of his own; he acquired with his liberty an admission into the political society of which his patron was a member. The consequences of this maxim would have prostituted the privileges of the Roman city to a mean and promiscuous multitude. Some season able exceptions were therefore provided; and the honourable distinction was confined to such slaves only as, for just causes, and with the approbation of the magistrate, should receive a solemn and legal manumission. Even these chosen freedmen obtained no more than the private rights of citizens, and were rigorously excluded from civil or military honours. Whatever might be the merit or fortune of their sons, *they* likewise were esteemed unworthy of a seat in the senate; nor were the traces of servile origin allowed to be completely obliterated till the third or fourth generation. Without destroying the distinction of ranks, a distant propect of freedom and honours was presented, even to those whom pride and prejudice almost disdained to number among the human species.

It was once proposed to discriminate the slaves

by a peculiar habit, but it was justly apprehended that there might be some danger in acquainting them with their own numbers. Without interpreting in their utmost strictness the liberal appellations of legions and myriads, we may venture to pronounce that the proportion of slaves who were valued as property was more considerable than that of servants, who can be computed only as an expense. The youths of a promising genius were instructed in the arts and sciences, and their price was ascertained by the degree of their skill and talents. Almost every profession, either liberal or mechanical, might be found in the household of an opulent senator. The ministers of pomp and sensuality were multiplied beyond the conception of modern luxury. It was more for the interest of the merchant or manufacturer to purchase than to hire his workmen; and in the country slaves were employed as the cheapest and most laborious instruments of agriculture. To confirm the general observation, and to display the multitude of slaves, we might allege a variety of particular instances. It was discovered, on a very melancholy occasion, that four hundred slaves were maintained in a single palace of Rome. The same number of four hundred belonged to an estate which an African widow, of a very private condition, resigned to her son, whilst she reserved for herself a much larger share of her property. A freedman, under the reign of Augustus, though his fortune had suffered great losses in the civil wars, left behind him three thousand

six hundred yoke of oxen, two hundred and fifty thousand head of smaller cattle, and, what was almost included in the description of cattle, four thousand one hundred and sixteen slaves.

The number of subjects who acknowledged the laws of Rome, of citizens, of provincials, and of slaves, cannot now be fixed with such a degree of accuracy as the importance of the object would deserve. We are informed that, when the emperor Claudius exercised the office of censor, he took an account of six millions nine hundred and forty-five thousand Roman citizens, who, with the proportion of women and children, must have amounted to about twenty millions of souls. The multitude of subjects of an inferior rank was uncertain and fluctuating. But, after weighing with attention every circumstance which could influence the balance, it seems probable that there existed in the time of Claudius about twice as many provincials as there were citizens, of either sex and of every age; and that the slaves were at least equal in number to the free inhabitants of the Roman world. The total amount of this imperfect calculation would rise to about one hundred and twenty millions of persons: a degree of population which possibly exceeds that of modern Europe, and forms the most numerous society that has ever been united under the same system of government.

Domestic peace and union were the natural consequences of the moderate and comprehensive policy embraced by the Romans. If we turn our

eyes towards the monarchies of Asia, we shall behold despotism in the centre and weakness in the extremities; the collection of the revenue, or the administration of justice, enforced by the presence of an army; hostile barbarians established in the heart of the country, hereditary satraps usurping the dominion of the provinces, and subjects inclined to rebellion, though incapable of freedom. But the obedience of the Roman world was uniform, voluntary, and permanent. The vanquished nations, blended into one great people, resigned the hope, nay even the wish, of resuming their independence, and scarcely consisted their own existence as distinct from the existence of Rome. The established authority of the emperors pervaded without an effort the wide extent of their dominions, and was exercised with the same facility on the banks of the Thames, or of the Nile, as on those of the Tiber. The legions were destined to serve against the public enemy, and the civil magistrate seldom required the aid of a military force. In this state of general security, the leisure as well as opulence both of the prince and people were devoted to improve and to adorn the Roman empire.

Among the innumerable monuments of architecture constructed by the Romans, how many have escaped the notice of history, how few have resisted the ravages of time and barbarism! And yet even the majestic ruins that are still scattered over Italy and the provinces would be sufficient to prove that those countries were once the seat of a

polite and powerful empire. Their greatness alone, or their beauty, might deserve our attention: but they are rendered more interesting by two important circusmtances, which connect the agreeable history of the arts with the more useful history of human manners. Many of those works were erected at private expense, and almost all were intended for public benefit. √

It is natural to suppose that the greatest number, as well as the most considerable of the Roman edifices, were raised by the emperors, who possessed so unbounded a command both of men and money. Augustus was accustomed to boast that he had found his capital of brick, and that he had left it of marble. The strict economy of Vespasian was the source of his magnificence. The works of Trajan bear the stamp of his genius. The public monuments with which Hadrian adorned every province of the empire were executed not only by his orders, but under his immediate inspection. He was himself an artist; and he loved the arts, as they conduced to the glory of the monarch. They were encouraged by the Antonines. as they contributed to the happiness of the people. But if the emperors were the first, they were not the only architects of their dominions. Their example was universally imitated by their principal subjects, who were not afraid of declaring to the world that they had spirit to conceive, and wealth to accomplish, the noblest undertakings. Scarcely had the proud structure of the Coliseum been dedicated at Rome, before edifices, of a smaller

scale indeed, but of the same design and materials, were erected for the use, and at the expense, of the cities of Capua and Verona. The inscription of the stupendous bridge of Alcantara attests that it was thrown over the Tagus by the contribution of a few Lusitanian communities. When Pliny was intrusted with the government of Bithynia and Pontus, provinces by no means the richest or most considerable of the empire, he found the cities within his jurisdiction striving with each other in every useful and ornamental work that might deserve the curiosity of strangers or the gratitude of their citizens. It was the duty of the proconsul to supply their deficiencies, to direct their taste, and sometimes to moderate their emulation. The opulent senators of Rome and the provinces esteemed it an honour, and almost an obligation, to adorn the splendour of their age and country; and the influence of fashion very frequently supplied the want of taste or generosity. Among a crowd of these private benefactors, we may select Herodes Atticus, an Athenian citizen, who lived in the age of the Antonines. Whatever might be the motive of his conduct, his magnificence would have been worthy of the greatest kings.

The family of Herod, at least after it had been favoured by fortune, was lineally descended from Cimon and Miltiades, Theseus and Cecrops, Æacus and Jupiter. But the posterity of so many gods and heroes was fallen into the most abject state. His grandfather had suffered by the hands of justice, and Julius Atticus, his father, must have

ended his life in poverty and contempt, had he not discovered an immense treasure buried under an old house, the last remains of his patrimony. According to the rigour of law, the emperor might have asserted his claim, and the prudent Atticus prevented, by a frank confession, the officiousness of informers. But the equitable Nerva, who then filled the throne, refused to accept any part of it, and commended him to use, without scruple, the present of fortune. The cautious Athenian still insisted that the treasure was too considerable for a subject, and that he knew not how to *use it*. *Abuse it then*, replied the monarch, with a good-natured peevishness; for it is your own. Many will be of opinion that Atticus literally obeyed the emperor's last instructions, since he expended the greatest part of his fortune, which was much increased by an advantageous marriage, in the service of the public. He had obtained for his son Herod the prefecture of the free cities of Asia; and the young magistrate, observing that the town of Troas was indifferently supplied with water, obtained from the munificence of Hadrian three hundred myriads of drachms (about a hundred thousand pounds) for the construction of a new aqueduct. But in the execution of the work the charge amounted to more than double the estimate, and the officers of the revenue began to murmur, till the generous Atticus silenced their complaints by requesting that he might be permitted to take upon himself the whole additional expense.

The ablest preceptors of Greece and Asia

had been invited by liberal rewards to direct the education of young Herod. Their pupil soon became a celebrated orator, according to the useless rhetoric of that age, which, confining itself to the schools, disdained to visit either the Forum or the Senate. He was honoured with the consulship at Rome: but the greatest part of his life was spent in a philosophic retirement at Athens and his adjacent villas; perpetually surrounded by sophists, who acknowledged, without reluctance, the superiority of a rich and generous rival. The monuments of his genius have perished; some considerable ruins still preserve the fame of his taste and munificence: modern travellers have measured the remains of the stadium which he constructed at Athens. It was six hundred feet in length, built entirely of white marble, capable of admitting the whole body of the people, and finished in four years, whilst Herod was president of the Athenian games. To the memory of his wife Regilla he dedicated a theatre, scarcely to be paralleled in the empire: no wood except cedar, very curiously carved, was employed in any part of the building. The Odeum, designed by Pericles for musical performances and the rehearsal of new tragedies, had been a trophy of the victory of the arts over barbaric greatness: as the timbers employed in the construction consisted chiefly of the masts of the Persian vessels. Notwithstanding the repairs bestowed on that ancient edifice by a king of Cappadocia, it was again fallen to decay. Herod restored its ancient beauty and magnificence. Nor

was the liberality of that industrious citizen confined to the walls of Athens. The most splendid ornaments bestowed on the temple of Neptune in the Isthmus, a theatre at Corinth, a stadium at Delphi, a bath at Thermopylæ, and an aqueduct at Canusium in Italy, were insufficient to exhaust his treasures. The people of Epirus, Thessaly, Eubœa, Bœotia and Peloponnesus, experienced his favours; and many inscriptions of the cities of Greece and Asia gratefully style Herodes Atticus their patron and benefactor.

In the commonwealths of Athens and Rome, the modest simplicity of private houses announced the equal condition of freedom; whilst the sovereignty of the people was represented in the majestic edifices destined to the public use; nor was this republican spirit totally extinguished by the introduction of wealth and monarchy. It was in works of national honour and benefit that the most virtuous of the emperors affected to display their magnificence. The golden palace of Nero excited a just indignation, but the vast extent of ground which had been usurped by his selfish luxury was more nobly filled under the succeeding reigns by the Coliseum, the baths of Titus, the Claudian portico, and the temples dedicated to the goddess of Peace and to the genius of Rome. These monuments of architecture, the property of the Roman people, were adorned with the most beautiful productions of Grecian painting and sculpture; and in the temple of Peace a very curious library was open

to the curiosity of the learned. At a small distance from thence was situated the Forum of Trajan. It was surrounded with a lofty portico in the form of a quadrangle, into which four triumphal arches opened a noble and spacious entrance: in the centre arose a column of marble, whose height, of one hundred and ten feet, denoted the elevation of the hill that had been cut away. This column, which still subsists in its ancient beauty, exhibited an exact representation of the Dacian victories of its founder. The veteran soldier contemplated the story of his own campaigns, and, by an easy illusion of national vanity, the peaceful citizen associated himself to the honours of the triumph. All the other quarters of the capital, and all the provinces of the empire, were embellished by the same liberal spirit of public magnificence, and were filled with amphitheatres, theatres, temples, porticos, triumphal arches, baths and aqueducts, all variously conducive to the health, the devotion and the pleasures of the meanest citizen. The last mentioned of those edifices deserve our peculiar attention. The boldness of the enterprise, the solidity of the execution, and the uses to which they were subservient, rank the aqueducts among the noblest monuments of Roman genius and power. The aqueducts of the capital claim a just pre-eminence; but the curious traveller, who, without the light of history, should examine those of Spoleto, of Metz, or of Segovia, would very naturally conclude that those provincial towns had formerly been the

residence of some potent monarch. The solitudes of Asia and Africa were once covered with flourishing cities whose populousness, and even whose existence, was derived from such artificial supplies of a perennial stream of fresh water.

We have computed the inhabitants, and contemplated the public works, of the Roman empire. The observation of the number and greatness of its cities will serve to confirm the former and to multiply the latter. It may not be unpleasing to collect a few scattered instances relative to that subject, without forgetting, however, that, from the vanity of nations and the poverty of language, the vague appellation of city has been indifferently bestowed on Rome and upon Laurentum. I. *Ancient* Italy is said to have contained eleven hundred and ninety-seven cities; and for whatsoever æra of antiquity the expression might be intended, there is not any reason to believe the country less populous in the age of the Antonines than in that of Romulus. The petty states of Latium were contained within the metropolis of the empire, by whose superior influence they had been attracted. Those parts of Italy which have so long languished under the lazy tyranny of priests and viceroys had been afflicted only by the more tolerable calamities of war; and the first symptoms of decay which *they* experienced were amply compensated by the rapid improvements of the Cisalpine Gaul. The splendour of Verona may be traced in its remains: yet Verona was less celebrated than Aquileia or Padua,

Milan or Ravenna. II. The spirit of improvement had passed the Alps, and been felt even in the woods of Britain, which were gradually cleared away to open a free space for convenient and elegant habitations. York was the seat of government; London was already enriched by commerce; and Bath was celebrated for the salutary effects of its medicinal waters. Gaul could boast of her twelve hundred cities; and though, in the northern parts, many of them, without excepting Paris itself, were little more than the rude and imperfect townships of a rising people, the southern provinces imitated the wealth and elegance of Italy. Many were the cities of Gaul—Marseilles, Arles, Nismes, Narbonne, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Autun, Vienne, Lyons, Langres, and Trèves—whose ancient condition might sustain an equal, and perhaps advantageous comparison with their present state. With regard to Spain, that country flourished as a province, and has declined as a kingdom. Exhausted by the abuse of her strength, by America, and by superstition, her pride might possibly be confounded, if we required such a list of three hundred and sixty cities as Pliny has exhibited under the reign of Vespasian. III. Three hundred African cities had once acknowledged the authority of Carthage, nor is it likely that their numbers diminished under the administration of the emperors: Carthage itself rose with new splendour from its ashes; and that capital, as well as Capua and Corinth, soon recovered all the advantages which can be separated

from independent sovereignty. IV. The provinces of the East present the contrast of Roman magnificence with Turkish barbarism. The ruins of antiquity scattered over uncultivated fields, and ascribed by ignorance to the power of magic, scarcely afford a shelter to the oppressed peasant or wandering Arab. Under the reign of the Cæsars, the proper Asia alone contained five hunderd populous cities, enriched with all the gifts of nature, and adorned with all the refinements of art. Eleven cities of Asia had once disputed the honour of dedicating a temple to Tiberius, and their respective merits were examined by the senate. Four of them were immediately rejected as unequal to the burden; and among these was Laodicea, whose splendour is still displayed in its ruins. Laodicea collected a very considerable revenue from its flocks of sheep, celebrated for the fineness of their wool, and had received, a little before the contest, a legacy of above four hundred thousand pounds by the testament of a generous citizen. If such was the poverty of Laodicea, what must have been the wealth of those cities whose claim appeared preferable, and particularly of Pergamus, of Smyrna, and of Ephesus, who so long disputed with each other the titular primacy of Asia? The captials of Syria and Egypt held a still superior rank in the empire; Antioch and Alexandria looked down with disdain on a crowd of dependent cities, and yielded with reluctance to the majesty of Rome itself.

All these cities were connected with each other, and with the capital, by the public highways, which, issuing from the Forum of Rome, traversed Italy, pervaded the provinces, and were terminated only by the frontiers of the empire. If we carefully trace the distance from the wall of Antoninus to Rome, and from thence to Jerusalem, it will be found that the great chain of communication, from the north-west to the south-east point of the empire, was drawn out to the length of four thousand and eighty Roman miles. The public roads were accurately divided by milestones, and ran in a direct line from one city to another, with very little respect for the obstacles either of nature or private property. Mountains were perforated, and bold arches thrown over the broadest and most rapid streams. The middle part of the road was raised into a terrace which commanded the adjacent country, consisted of several strata of sand, gravel, and cement, and was paved with large stones, or, in some places near the capital, with granite. Such was the solid construction of the Roman highways, whose firmness has not entirely yielded to the effort of fifteen centuries. They united the subjects of the most distant provinces by an easy and familiar intercourse; but their primary object had been to facilitate the marches of the legions; nor was any country considered as completely subdued, till it had been rendered, in all its parts, pervious to the arms and authority of the conqueror. The advantage of receiving the earliest intelligence,

and of conveying their orders with celerity, induced the emperors to establish throughout their extensive dominions the regular institution of post. Houses were everywhere erected at the distance only of five or six miles; each of them was constantly provided with forty horses, and by the help of these relays it was easy to travel an hundred miles in a day along the Roman roads. The use of the posts was allowed to those who claimed it by an Imperial mandate; but though originally intended for the public service, it was sometimes indulged to the business or conveniency of private citizens. Nor was the communication of the Roman empire less free and open by sea than it was by land. The provinces surrounded and enclosed the Mediterranean: and Italy, in the shape of an immense promontory, advanced into the midst of that great lake. The coasts of Italy are, in general, destitute of safe harbours; but human industry had corrected the deficiencies of nature; and the artificial port of Ostia, in particular, situate at the mouth of the Tiber, and formed by the emperor Claudius, was an useful monument of Roman greatness. From this port, which was only sixteen miles from the capital, a favourable breeze frequently carried vessels in seven days to the Columns of Hercules, and in nine or ten to Alexandria in Egypt.

Whatever evils either reason or declamation have imputed to extensive empire, the power of Rome was attended with some beneficial consequences to mankind; and the same freedom of in-

tercourse which extended the vices, diffused likewise the improvements, of social life. In the more remote ages of antiquity the world was unequally divided. The East was in the immemorial possession of arts and luxury: whilst the West was inhabited by rude and warlike barbarians, who either disdained agriculture, or to whom it was totally unknown. Under the protection of an established government, the productions of happier climates, and the industry of more civilised nations, were gradually introduced into the western countries of Europe; and the natives were encouraged, by an open and profitable commerce, to multiply the former, as well as to improve the latter. It would be almost impossible to enumerate all the articles, either of the animal or the vegetable reign, which were successively imported into Europe from Asia and Egypt; but it will not be unworthy of the dignity, and much less of the utility, of an historical work, slightly to touch on a few of the principal heads. 1. Almost all the flowers, the herbs, and the fruits, that grow in our European gardens, are of foreign extraction, which, in many cases, is betrayed even by their names: the apple was a native of Italy; and when the Romans had tasted the richer flavour of the apricot, the peach, the pomegranate, the citron, and the orange, they contented themselves with applying to all these new fruits the common denomination of apple, discriminating them from each other by the additional epithet of their country. 2. In the time of Homer the

vine grew wild in the island of Sicily, and most probably in the adjacent continent; but it was not improved by the skill, nor did it afford a liquor grateful to the taste, of the savage inhabitants. A thousand years afterwards Italy could boast that, of the fourscore most generous and celebrated wines, more than two-thirds were produced from her soil. The blessing was soon communicated to the Narbonnese province of Gaul; but so intense was the cold to the north of the Cevennes, that, in the time of Strabo, it was thought impossible to ripen the grapes in those parts of Gaul. This difficulty, however, was gradually vanquished; and there is some reason to believe that the vineyards of Burgundy are as old as the age of the Antonines. 3. The olive, in the western world, followed the progress of peace, of which it was considered as the symbol. Two centuries after the foundation of Rome, both Italy and Africa were strangers to that useful plant; it was naturalised in those countries, and at length carried into the heart of Spain and Gaul. The timid errors of the ancients, that it required a certain degree of heat, and could only flourish in the neighbourhood of the sea, were insensibly exploded by industry and experience. 4. The cultivation of flax was transported from Egypt to Gaul, and enriched the whole country, however it might impoverish the particular lands on which it was sown. 5. The use of artificial grasses became familiar to the farmers both of Italy and the provinces, particularly the lucerne, which

derived its name and origin form Media. The assured supply of wholesome and plentiful food for the cattle during winter multiplied the number of the flocks and herds, which in their turn contributed to the fertility of the soil. To all these improvements may be added an assiduous attention to mines and fisheries, which, by employing a multitude of laborious hands, serve to increase the pleasures of the rich and the subsistence of the poor. The elegant treatise of Columella describes the advanced state of the Spanish husbandry under the reign of Tiberius; and it may be observed that those famines which so frequently afflicted the infant republic were seldom or never experienced by the extensive empire of Rome. The accidental scarcity, in any single province, was immediately relieved by the plenty of its more fortunate neighbours.

Agriculture is the foundation of manufactures; since the productions of nature are the materials of art. Under the Roman empire, the labour of an industrious and ingenious people was variously, but incessantly, employed in the service of the rich. In their dress, their table, their houses, and their furniture, the favourites of fortune united every refinement of conveniency, of elegance, and of splendour, whatever could soothe their pride, or gratify their sensuality. Such refinements, under the odious name of luxury, have been severely arraigned by the moralists of every age; and it might perhaps be more conducive to the virtue, as well as happiness, of mankind, if all possessed the

necessaries, and none the superfluities, of life. But in the present imperfect condition of society, luxury, though it may proceed from vice or folly, seems to be the only means that can correct the unequal distribution of property. The diligent mechanic and the skilful artist, who have obtained no share in the division of the earth, receive a voluntary tax from the possessors of land; and the latter are prompted, by a sense of interest, to improve those estates, with whose produce they may purchase additional pleasures. This operation, the particular effects of which are felt in every society, acted with much more diffusive energy in the Roman world. The provinces would soon have been exhausted of their wealth, if the manufactures and commerce of luxury had not insensibly restored to the industrious subjects the sums which were exacted from them by the arms and authority of Rome. As long as the circulation was confined within the bounds of the empire, it impressed the political machine with a new degree of activity, and its consequences, sometimes beneficial, could never become pernicious.

But it is no easy task to confine luxury within the limits of an empire. The most remote countries of the ancient world were ransacked to supply the pomp and delicacy of Rome. The forest of Scythia afforded some valuable furs. Amber was brought overland from the shores of the Baltic to the Danube; and the barbarians were astonished at the price which they received in exchange for so useless a commodity. There was

a considerable demand for Babylonian carpets, and other manufactures of the East, but the most important and unpopular branch of foreign trade was carried on with Arabia and India. Every year, about the time of the summer solstice, a fleet of an hundred and twenty vessels sailed from Myos-hormos, a port of Egypt, on the Red Sea. By the periodical assistance of the monsoons, they traversed the ocean in about forty days. The coast of Malabar, or the island of Ceylon, was the usual term of their navigation, and it was in those markets that the merchants from the more remote countries of Asia expected their arrival. The return of the fleet of Egypt was fixed to the months of December or January; and as soon as their rich cargo had been transported, on the backs of camels, from the Red Sea to the Nile, and had descended that river as far as Alexandria, it was poured, without delay, into the capital of the empire. The objects of oriental traffic were splendid and trifling; silk, a pound of which was esteemed not inferior in value to a pound of gold; precious stones, among which the pearl claimed the first rank after the diamond; and a variety of aromatics, that were consumed in religious worship and the pomp of funerals. The labour and risk of the voyage was rewarded with almost incredible profit; but the profit was made upon Roman subjects, and a few individuals were enriched at the expense of the public. As the natives of Arabia and India were contented with the productions and manufactures of their own country,

silver, on the side of the Romans, was the principal, if not the only, instrument of commerce. It was a complaint worthy of the gravity of the senate, that, in the purchase of female ornaments, the wealth of the state was irrecoverably given away to foreign and hostile nations. The annual loss is computed, by a writer of an inquisitive but censorious temper, at upwards of eight hundred thousand pounds sterling. Such was the style of discontent, brooding over the dark prospect of approaching poverty. And yet, if we compare the proportion between gold and silver, as it stood in the time of Pliny, and as it was fixed in the reign of Constantine, we shall discover within that period a very considerable increase. There is not the least reason to suppose that gold was become more scarce; it is therefore evident that silver was grown more common; that, whatever might be the amount of the Indian and Arabian exports, they were far from exhausting the wealth of the Roman world; and that the produce of the mines abundantly supplied the demands of commerce.

Notwithstanding the propensity of mankind to exalt the past and to depreciate the present, the tranquil and prosperous state of the empire was warmly felt and honestly confessed by the provincials as well as Romans. "They acknowledged that the true principles of social life, laws, agriculture, and science, which had been first invented by the wisdom of Athens, were now firmly established by the power of Rome, under whose auspicious influence the fiercest barbarians were

united by an equal government and common language. They affirm that, with the improvement of arts, the human species was visibly multiplied. They celebrate the increasing splendour of the cities, the beautiful face of the country, cultivated and adorned like an immense garden; and the long festival of peace, which was enjoyed by so many nations, forgetful of their ancient animosities, and delivered from the apprehension of future danger." Whatever suspicions may be suggested by the air of rhetoric and declamation which seems to prevail in these passages, the substance of them is perfectly agreeable to historic truth.

It was scarcely possible that the eyes of contemporaries should discover in the public felicity the latent causes of decay and corruption. This long peace, and the uniform government of the Romans, introduced a slow and secret poison into the vitals of the empire. The minds of men were gradually reduced to the same level, the fire of genius was extinguished, and even the military spirit evaporated. The natives of Europe were brave and robust. Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Illyricum supplied the legions with excellent soldiers, and constituted the real strength of the monarchy. Their personal valour remained, but they no longer possessed that public courage which is nourished by the love of independence, the sense of national honour, the presence of danger, and the habit of command. They received laws and governors from the will of their sovereign, and trusted for their defence to a

mercenary army. The posterity of their boldest leaders was contented with the rank of citizens and subjects. The most aspiring spirits resorted to the court or standard of the emperors; and the deserted provinces, deprived of political strength or union, insensibly sank into the languid indifference of private life.

The love of letters, almost inseparable from peace and refinement, was fashionable among the subjects of Hadrian and the Antonines, who were themselves men of learning and curiosity. It was diffused over the whole extent of their empire; the most northern tribes of Britons had acquired a taste for rhetoric; Homer as well as Virgil were transcribed and studied on the banks of the Rhine and Danube; and the most liberal rewards sought out the faintest glimmerings of literary merit. The sciences of physic and astronomy were successfully cultivated by the Greeks; the observations of Ptolemy and the writings of Galen are studied by those who have improved their discoveries and corrected their errors; but if we except the inimitable Lucian, this age of indolence passed away without having produced a single writer of original genius, or who excelled in the arts of elegant composition. The authority of Plato and Aristotle, of Zeno and Epicurus, still reigned in the schools; and their systems, transmitted with blind deference from one generation of disciples to another, precluded every generous attempt to exercise the powers, or enlarge the limits, of the human mind. The

beauties of the poets and orators, instead of kindling a fire like their own, inspired only cold and servile imitations: or, if any ventured to deviate from those models, they deviated at the same time from good sense and propriety. On the revival of letters, the youthful vigour of the imagination after a long repose, national emulation, a new religion, new languages, and a new world, called forth the genius of Europe. But the provincials of Rome, trained by an uniform artificial foreign education, were engaged in a very unequal competition with those bold ancients who, by expressing their genuine feelings in their native tongue, had already occupied every place of honour. The name of Poet was almost forgotten; that of Orator was usurped by the sophists. A cloud of critics, of compilers, of commentators, darkened the face of learning, and the decline of genius was soon followed by the corruption of taste.

The sublime Longinus, who, in somewhat a later period, and in the court of a Syrian queen, preserved the spirit of ancient Athens, observes and laments this degeneracy of his comtemporaries, which debased their sentiments, enervated their courage, and depressed their talents. "In the same manner," says he, "as some children always remain pigmies, whose infant limbs have been too closely confined; thus our tender minds, fettered by the prejudices and habits of a just servitude, are unable to expand themselves, or to attain that well-porportioned greatness which

we admire in the ancients, who, living under a popular government, wrote with the same freedom as they acted." This diminutive stature of mankind, if we pursue the metaphor, was daily sinking below the old standard, and the Roman world was indeed peopled by a race of pigmies, when the fierce giants of the north broke in and mended the puny breed. They restored a manly spirit of freedom; and, after the revolution of ten centuries, freedom became the happy parent of taste and science.

SATYRANE'S LETTERS

Letter I

On Sunday morning, September 16, 1798, the Hamburg Packet set sail from Yarmouth: and I, for the first time in my life, beheld my native land retiring from me. At the moment of its disappearance—in all the kirks, churches, chapels, and meeting-houses, in which the greater number, I hope, of my countrymen were at that time assembled, I will dare question whether there was one more ardent prayer offered up to heaven, than that which I then preferred for my country. Now then (said I to a gentleman who was standing near me) we are out of our country. Not yet, not yet! he replied, and pointed to the sea; "This, too, is a Briton's country." This *bon mot* gave a fillip to my spirits, I rose and looked around on my fellow-passengers, who were all on the deck. We were eighteen in number, *videlicet*, five Englishmen, an English lady, a French gentleman and his servant, an Hanoverian and his servant, a Prussian, a Swede, two Danes, and a Mulatto boy, a German tailor and his wife (the smallest couple I ever beheld) and a Jew. We were all on the deck; but in a short time I observed marks of dismay. The lady retired to the cabin in some confusion, and many of the

faces round me assumed a very doleful and frog-coloured appearance; and within an hour the number of those on deck was lessened by one half. I was giddy, but not sick, and the giddiness soon went away, but left a feverishness and want of appetite, which I attributed, in great measure, to the *sæva Mephitis* of the bilge-water; and it was certainly not decreased by the exportations from the cabin. However, I was well enough to join the able-bodied passengers, one of whom observed, not inaptly, that Momus might have discovered an easier way to see a man's inside, than by placing a window in his breast. He needed only have taken a salt-water trip in a packet-boat.

I am inclined to believe that a packet is far superior to a stage-coach, as a means of making men open out to each other. In the latter the uniformity of posture disposes to dozing, and the definitiveness of the period at which the company will separate, makes each individual think more of those to whom he is going, than of those with whom he is going. But at sea, more curiosity is excited, if only on this account, that the pleasant or unpleasant qualities of your companions are of greater importance to you, from the uncertainty how long you may be obliged to house with them. Besides, if you are countrymen, that now begins to form a distinction and a bond of brotherhood; and if of different countries, there are new incitements of conversation, more to ask and more to communicate. I found that I had interested the

Danes in no common degree. I had crept into the boat on the deck and fallen asleep; but was awaked by one of them about three o'clock in the afternoon, who told me that they had been seeking me in every hole and corner, and insisted that I should join their party and drink with them. He talked English with such fluency, as left me wholly unable to account for the singular and even ludicrous incorrectness with which he spoke it. I went, and found some excellent wines and a dessert of grapes with a pine-apple. The Danes had christened me Doctor Teology, and dressed as I was all in black, with large shoes and black worsted stockings, I might certainly have passed very well for a methodist missionary. However I disclaimed my title. What then you may be? A man of fortune? No!—A merchant? No!—A merchant's traveller? No!—A clerk? No!—*Un Philosophe*, perhaps? It was at that time in my life, in which of all possible names and characters I had the greatest disgust to that of *un Philosophe*. But I was weary of being questioned, and rather than be nothing, or at best only the abstract idea of a man, I submitted by a bow, even to the aspersion implied in the word *un Philosophe*. The Dane then informed me, that all in the present party were philosophers likewise. Certes we were not of the stoic school. For we drank and talked and sung, till we talked and sung all together; and then we rose and danced on the deck a set of dances, which, in one sense of the word at least, were very intelligibly and

appropriately entitled reels. The passengers who lay in the cabin below in all the agonies of sea-sickness, must have found our bacchanalian merriment

> ...." a tune
> Harsh and of dissonant mood from their
> complaint."

I thought so at the time; and (by way, I suppose, of supporting my newly assumed philosophical character) I thought, too, how closely the greater number of our virtues are connected with the fear of death, and how little sympathy we bestow on pain, where there is no danger.

The two Danes were brothers. The one was a man with a clear white complexion, white hair, and white eyebrows, looked silly, and nothing that he uttered gave the lie to his looks. The other, whom, by way of eminence, I have called the Dane, had likewise white hair, but was much shorter than his brother, with slender limbs, and a very thin face slightly pock-fretten. This man convinced me of the justice of an old remark, that many a faithful portrait in our novels and farces has been rashly censured for an outrageous caricature, or perhaps nonentity. I had retired to my station in the boat—he came and seated himself by my side, and appeared not a little tipsy. He commenced the conversation in the most magnific style, and as a sort of pioneering to his own vanity, he flattered me with such

grossness! The parasites of the old comedy were modest in the comparison. His language and accentuation were so exceedingly singular, that I determined, for once in my life, to take notes of a conversation. Here it follows, somewhat abridged indeed, but in all other respects as accurately as my memory permitted.

The Dane. Vat imagination! vat language! vat vast science! and vat eyes! vat a milk-white forehead!—O my heafen! vy, you're a Got!

Answer. You do me too much honour, sir.

The Dane. O me! if you should dink I is flattering you!—No, no, no! I haf ten tousand a year—yes, ten tousand a year—yes, ten tousand pound a year! Vell—and vat is dhat? a mere trifle! I'ouldn't gif my sincere heart for ten times dhe money.—Yes, you're a Got! I a mere man! But, my dear friend! dhink of me, as a man! Is, is—I mean to ask you now, my dear friend—is I not very eloquent? Is I not speak English very fine?

Answer. Most admirably! Believe me, sir! I have seldom heard even a native talk so *fluently*.

The Dane. (*Squeezing my hand with great vehemence.*) My *dear* friend! vat an affection and fidelity ve have for each odher! But tell me, do tell me,—Is I not, now and den, speak some fault? Is I not in some wrong?

Answer. Why, sir! perhaps it might be observed by nice critics in the English language, that you occasionally use the word "Is", instead of "am." In our best companies we generally

say I am, and not I is or I'se. Excuse me, sir! it is a mere trifle.

The Dane. O!—is, is, am, am, am. Yes, yes—I know, I know.

Answer. I am, thou art, he is, we are, ye are, they are.

The Dane. Yes, yes—I know, I know—Am, am, am, is dha presens, and Is is dhe perfectum —yes, yes—and are is dhe plusquam perfectum.

Answer. And "art," sir! is—

The Dane. My dear friend! it is dhe plusquam perfectum, no, no—dhat is a great lie. "Are" is dhe plusquam perfectum—and "art" is dhe plusquam plueperfectum—(*then swinging my hand to and fro, and cocking his little bright hazel eyes at me, that danced with vanity and wine*)—you see, my dear friend! that I too have *some* lehrning.

Answer. Learning, sir? Who dares suspect it? Who can listen to you for a minute, who can even look at you, without perceiving the extent of it?

The Dane. My *dear* friend!—(*then with a would-be humble look, and in a tone of voice as if he was reasoning*), I could not talk so of presens and imperfectum, and futurum and plusquam plueperfectum, and all dhat, my dear friend! without *some* lehrning?

Answer. Sir! a man like you cannot talk on any subject without discovering the depth of his information.

The Dane. Dhe grammatic Greek, my friend!

ha! ha! ha! (*laughing, and swinging my hand to and fro—then with a sudden transition to great solemnity*), now I will tell you, my dear friend! Dhere did happen about me vat de whole historia of Denmark record no instance about nobody else. Dhe bishop did ask me all dhe questions about all dhe religion in dhe Latin grammar.

Answer. The grammar, sir? The language, I presume—

The Dane. (*A little offended.*) Grammar is language, and language is grammar—

Answer. Ten thousand pardons!

The Dane. Vell, and I was only fourteen years—

Answer. Only fourteen years old?

The Dane. No more. I vas fourteen years old—and he asked me all questions, religion and philosophy, and all in dhe Latin language—and I answered him all every one, my dear friend! all in dhe Latin language.

Answer. A prodigy! an absolute prodigy!

The Dane. No, no, no! he was a bishop, a great superintendent.

Answer. Yes! a bishop.

The Dane. A bishop—not a mere predicant, not a prediger—

Answer. My dear sir! we have misunderstood each other. I said that your answering in Latin at so early an age was a prodigy, that is a thing that is wonderful, that does not often happen.

The Dane. Often! Dhere is not von instance recorded in dhe whole historia of Denmark.

Answer. And since then, sir—?

The Dane. I was sent ofer to dhe Vest Indies —to our island, and dhere I had no more to do vid books. No! no! I put my genius anodher way—and I haf made ten tousand pound a year Is not dhat *ghenius*, my dear friend!—But vat is money! I dhink the poorest man alive my equal. Yes, my dear friend! my little fortune is pleasant to my generous heart, because I can do good—no man with so little a fortune ever did so much generosity—no person, no man person, no woman person, ever denies it. But we are all Got's children.

Here the Hanoverian interrupted him, and the other Dane, the Swede, and the Prussian, joined us, together with a young Englishman who spoke the German fluently, and interpreted to me many of the Prussian's jokes. The Prussian was a travelling merchant, turned of threescore, a hale man, tall, strong, and stout, full of stories, gesticulations, and buffoonery, with the soul as well as the look of a mountebank, who, while he is making you laugh, picks your pocket. Amid all his droll looks and droll gestures, there remained one look untouched by laughter; and that one look was the true face, the others were but its mask. The Hanoverian was a pale, fat, bloated young man, whose father had made a large fortune in London, as an army-contractor. He seemed to emulate

the manners of young Englishmen of fortune. He was a goodnatured fellow, not without information or literature; but a most egregious coxcomb. He had been in the habit of attending the House of Commons, and had once spoken, as he informed me, with great applause in a debating society. For this he appeared to have qualified himself with laudable industry: for he was perfect in "Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary," and with an accent which forcibly reminded me of the Scotchman in "Roderic Random," who professed to teach the English pronunciation, he was constantly *deferring* to my superior judgment, whether or no I had pronounced this or that word with propriety, or "the true delicacy." When he spoke, though it were only half a dozen sentences, he always rose; for which I could detect no other motive, than his partiality to that elegant phrase so liberally introduced in the orations of our British legislators. "While I am on my legs." The Swede, whom, for reasons that will soon appear. I shall distinguish by the name of "Nobility," was a strong-featured, scurvy-faced man, his complexion resembling, in colour, a red-hot poker beginning to cool. He appeared miserably dependent on the Dane; but was however incomparably the best informed and most rational of the party. Indeed his manners and conversation discovered him to be both a man of the world and a gentleman. The Jew was in the hold: the French gentleman was lying on the

deck so ill that I could observe nothing concerning him, except the affectionate attentions of his servant to him. The poor fellow was very sick himself, and every now and then ran to the side of the vessel, still keeping his eye on his master, but returned in a moment and seated himself again by him, now supporting his head, now wiping his forehead and talking to him all the while in the most soothing tones. There had been a matrimonial squabble of a very ludicrous kind in the cabin, between the little German tailor and his little wife. He had secured two beds, one for himself and one for her. This had struck the little woman as a very cruel action; she insisted upon their having but one, and assured the mate, in the most piteous tones, that she was his lawful wife. The mate and the cabin-boy decided in her favour, abused the little man for his want of tenderness with much humour, and hoisted him into the same compartment with his sea-sick wife. This quarrel was interesting to me, as it procured me a bed, which I otherwise should not have had.

In the evening, at 7 o'clock, the sea rolled higher, and the Dane, by means of the greater agitation, eliminated enough of what he had been swallowing to make room for a great deal more. His favourite potation was sugar and brandy, *i.e.*, a very little warm water with a large quantity of brandy, sugar, and nutmeg. His servant-boy, a black-eyed Mulatto, had a good-natured round face, exactly the colour

of the skin of the walnut-kernel. The Dane and I were again seated, *tête-à-tête*, in the ship's boat. The conversation, which was now indeed rather an oration than a dialogue, became extravagant beyond all that I ever heard. He told me that he had made a large fortune in the island of Santa Cruz, and was now returning to Denmark to enjoy it. He expatiated on the style in which he meant to live, and the great undertakings which he proposed to himself to commence, till the brandy aiding his vanity, and his vanity and garrulity aiding the brandy, he talked like a madman—entreated me to accompany him to Denmark—there I should see his influence with the government, and he would introduce me to the king, etc., etc. Thus he went on dreaming aloud, and then passing with a very lyrical transition to the subject of general politics, he declaimed, like a member of the Corresponding Society, *about* (not concerning) the Rights of Man, and assured me that notwithstanding his fortune, he thought the poorest man alive his equal.—All are equal, my dear friend! all are equal! Ve are all Got's children. The poorest man haf the same rights with me. Jack! Jack! some more sugar and brandy. Dhere is dhat fellow now! He is a Mulatto—but he is my equal.—That's right, Jack! (*taking the sugar and brandy.*) Here, you sir! shake hands with dhis gentleman! Shake hands with me, you dog! Dhere, dhere!—We are all equal, my dear friend!—Do I not speak like Socrates, and

Plato, and Cato—they were all philosophors, my dear *philosophe*! all very great men!—and so was Homer and Virgil—but they were poets, yes, yes! I know all about it!—But what can anybody say more than this? we are all equal, all Got's children. I haf ten tousand a year, but I am no more dhan the meanest man alive. I haf no pride; and yet, my dear friend! I can say, do! and it is done. Ha! ha! ha! my dear friend! Now dhere is dhat gentleman (*pointing to* "*Nobility*") he is a Swedish baron—you shall see. Ho! (*calling to the Swede*), get me, will you, a bottle of wine from the cabin.

Swede. Here, Jack! go and get your master a bottle of wine from the cabin.

Dane. No, no, no! do *you* go now—you go yourself—*you* go now!

Swede. Pah!

Dane. Now go! Go, I pray you. *And the Swede went*!!

After this the Dane commenced an harangue on religion, and mistaking me for *un philosophe* in the continental sense of the word, he talked of Deity in a declamatory style, very much resembling the devotional rants of that rude blunderer, Mr. Thomas Paine, in his Age of Reason, and whispered in my ear, what damned *hypocrism* all Jesus Christ's business was. I dare aver, that few men have less reason to charge themselves with indulging in *persiflage* than myself. I should hate it, if it were only that it is a Frenchman's vice, and feel a pride

in avoiding it because our own language is too honest to have a word to express it by. But in this instance the temptation had been too powerful, and I have placed it on the list of my offences. Pericles answered one of his dearest friends, who had solicited him on a case of life and death to take an equivocal oath for his preservation: *Debeo amicis opitulari, sed usque ad Deos.** Friendship herself must place her last and boldest step on this side the altar. What Pericles would not do to save a friend's life, you may be assured I would not hazard merely to mill the chocolate-pot of a drunken fool's vanity till it frothed over. Assuming a serious look, I professed myself a believer, and sunk at once a hundred fathoms in his good graces. He retired to his cabin, and I wrapped myself up in my great coat, and looked at the water. A beautiful white cloud of foam at momently intervals coursed by the side of the vessel with a roar, and little stars of flame danced and sparkled and went out in it: and every now and then light detachments of this white cloud-like foam darted off the vessel's side, each with its own small constellation, over the sea, and scoured out of sight like a Tartar troop over a wilderness.

It was cold, the cabin was at open war with my olfactories, and I found reason to rejoice in my great coat, a weighty, high-capped,

* *Translation.* It behoves me to side with my friends but only as far as the gods.

respectable rug, the collar of which turned over, and played the part of a night-cap very passably. In looking up at two or three bright stars, which oscillated with the motion of the sails, I fell asleep, but was awakened at one o'clock, Monday morning, by a shower of rain. I found myself compelled to go down into the cabin, where I slept very soundly, and awoke with a very good appetite at breakfast time, my nostrils, the most placable of all the senses, reconciled to or indeed insensible of the *mephitis*.

Monday, September 17, I had a long conversation with the Swede, who spoke with the most poignant contempt of the Dane, whom he described as a fool, purse-mad; but he confirmed the boasts of the Dane, respecting the largeness of his fortune, which he had acquired in the first instance as an advocate, and afterwards as a planter. From the Dane and from himself I collected that he was indeed a Swedish nobleman, who had squandered a fortune, that was never very large, and had made over his property to the Dane, on whom he was now utterly dependent. He seemed to suffer very little pain from the Dane's insolence. He was in a high degree humane and attentive to the English lady, who suffered most fearfully, and for whom he performed many little offices with a tenderness and delicacy which seemed to prove real goodness of heart. Indeed, his general manners and conversation were not only pleasing, but even interesting; and I struggled to believe his insensibility

respecting the Dane philosophical fortitude. For though the Dane was now quite sober, his character oozed out of him at every pore, and after dinner, when he was again flushed with wine, every quarter of an hour or perhaps oftener he would shout out to the Swede, "Ho! Nobility, go—do such a thing! Mr. Nobility!—tell the gentlemen such a story, and so forth," with an insolence which must have excited disgust and detestation. if his vulgar rants on the sacred rights of equality, joined to his wild havoc of general grammar, no less than of the English language, had not rendered it so irresistibly laughable.

At four o'clock I observed a wild duck swimming on the waves, a single solitary wild duck. It is not easy to conceive how interesting a thing it looked in that round objectless desert of waters. I had associated such a feeling of immensity with the ocean, that I felt exceedingly disappointed, when I was out of sight of all land, at the narrowness and *nearness*, as it were, of the circle of the horizon. So little are images capable of satisfying the obscure feelings connected with words. In the evening the sails were lowered, lest we should run foul of the land, which can be seen only at a small distance. And at four o'clock, on Tuesday morning, I was awakened by the cry of land! land! It was an ugly island rock at a distance on our left, called Heiligeland, well known to many passengers from Yarmouth to Hamburg, who have been obliged by stormy weather to pass weeks and weeks in weary captivity on it,

stripped of all their money by the exorbitant demands of the wretches who inhabit it. So at least the sailors informed me. About nine o'clock we saw the main land, which seemed scarcely able to hold its head above water, low, flat, and dreary, with light-houses and land-marks which seemed to give a character and language to the dreariness. We entered the mouth of the Elbe, passing Neu-werk; though as yet the right bank only of the river was visible to us. On this I saw a church, and thanked God for my safe voyage, not without affectionate thoughts of those I had left in England. At eleven o'clock on the same morning we arrived at Cuxhaven, the ship dropped anchor, and the boat was hoisted out to carry the Hanoverian and a few others on shore. The captain agreed to take us, who remained, to Hamburg for ten guineas, to which the Dane contributed so largely, that the other passengers paid but half a guinea each. Accordingly we hauled anchor, and passed gently up the river. At Cuxhaven both sides of the river may be seen in clear weather; we could now see the right bank only. We passed a multitude of English traders that had been waiting many weeks for a wind. In a short time both banks became visible, both flat and evidencing the labour of human hands by their extreme neatness. On the left bank I saw a church or two in the distance; on the right bank we passed by steeple and windmill and cottage, and windmill and single house, windmill and windmill, and neat single house, and steeple.

These were the objects and in the succession. The shores were very green and planted with trees not inelegantly. Thirty-five miles from Cuxhaven the night came on us, and as the navigation of the Elbe is perilous, we dropped anchor.

Over what place, thought I, does the moon hang to *your* eye, my dearest friend? To me it hung over the left bank of the Elbe. Close above the moon was a huge volume of deep black cloud, while a very thin fillet crossed the middle of the orb, as narrow and thin and black as a ribbon of crape. The long trembling road of moonlight, which lay on the water and reached to the stern of our vessel, glimmered dimly and obscurely. We saw two or three lights from the right bank, probably from bed-rooms. I felt the striking contrast between the silence of this majestic stream, whose banks are populous with men and women and children, and flocks and herds—between the silence by night of this peopled river, and the ceaseless noise, and uproar, and loud agitations of the desolate solitude of the ocean. The passengers below had all retired to their beds: and I felt the interest of this quiet scene the more deeply from the circumstances of having just quitted them. For the Prussian had during the whole of the evening displayed all his talents to captivate the Dane, who had admitted him into the train of his dependents. The young Englishman continued to interpret the Prussian's jokes to me. They were all without exception profane and abominable, but some sufficiently witty, and a few incidents, which he related in his own per-

son, were valuable as illustrating the manners of the countries in which they had taken place.

Five o'clock on Wednesday morning we hauled the anchor, but were soon obliged to drop it again in consequence of a thick fog, which our captain feared would continue the whole day; but about nine it cleared off, and we sailed slowly along, close by the shore of a very beautiful island, forty miles from Cuxhaven, the wind continuing slack. This holme or island is about a mile and a half in length, wedge-shaped, well wooded, with glades of the liveliest green, and rendered more interesting by the remarkably neat farmhouse on it. It seemed made for retirement without solitude—a place that would allure one's friends while it precluded the impertinent calls of mere visitors. The shores of the Elbe now became more beautiful, with rich meadows and trees running like a low wall along the river's edge, and peering over them, neat houses and (especially on the right bank) a profusion of steeple-spires, white, black, or red. An instinctive taste teaches men to build their churches in flat countries with spire-steeples, which as they cannot be referred to any other object, point as with silent finger to the sky and stars, and sometimes, when they reflect the brazen light of a rich though rainy sun-set, appear like a pyramid of flame burning heaven-ward. I remember once, and once only, to have seen a spire in a narrow valley of a mountainous country. The effect was not only mean but ludicrous, and reminded me against my will of an *extinguisher;* the close neighbourhood of the high mountain, at the foot of which it stood,

had so completely dwarfed it, and deprived it of all connection with the sky or clouds. Forty-six English miles from Cuxhaven, and sixteen from Hamburg, the Danish village Veder ornaments the left bank with its black steeple, and close by it the wild and pastoral hamlet of Schulau. Hitherto both the right and left bank, green to the very brink, and level with the river, resembled the shores of a park canal. The trees and houses were alike low, sometimes the low trees over-topping the yet lower houses, sometimes the low houses rising above the yet lower trees. But at Schulau the left bank rises at once forty or fifty feet, and stares on the river with its perpendicular façade of sand, thinly patched with tufts of green. The Elbe continued to present a more and more lively spectacle from the multitude of fishing boats and the flocks of sea gulls wheeling round them, the clamorous rivals and companions of the fishermen; till we came to Blankaness, a most interesting village scattered amid scattered trees, over three hills in three divisions. Each of the three hills stares upon the river, with faces of bare sand, with which the boats with their bare poles, standing in files along the banks, made a sort of fantastic harmony. Between each façade lies a green and woody dell, each deeper than the other. In short it is a large village made up of individual cottages, each cottage in the centre of its own little wood or orchard, and each with its own separate path: a village with a labyrinth of paths, or rather a *neighbourhood* of houses! It is inhabited by fishermen and boatmakers, the Blankanese boats being in great request

through the whole navigation of the Elbe. Here first we saw the spires of Hamburg, and from hence as far as Altona the left bank of the Elbe is uncommonly pleasing, considered as the vicinity of an industrious and republican city—in that style of beauty, or rather prettiness, that might tempt the citizen into the country, and yet gratify the taste which he had acquired in the town. Summer-houses and Chinese show-work are everywhere scattered along the high and green banks; the boards of the farm-houses left unplastered and gaily painted with green and yellow; and scarcely a tree not cut into shapes and made to remind the human being of his own power and intelligence instead of the wisdom of nature. Still, however, these are links of connection between town and country, and far better than the affection of tastes and enjoyments for which men's habits have disqualified them. Pass them by on Saturdays and Sundays with the burghers of Hamburg smoking their pipes, the women and children feasting in the alcoves of box and yew, and it becomes a nature of its own. On Wednesday, four o'clock, we left the vessel, and passing with trouble through the huge masses of shipping that seemed to choke the wide Elbe from Altona upward, we were at length landed at the Boom House, Hamburg.

MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH POETS

My father was a Dissenting Minister at W—m in Shropshire; and in the year 1798 (the figures that compose that date are to me like the " dreaded name of Demogorgon ") Mr. Coleridge came to Shrewsbury, to succeed Mr. Rowe in the spiritual charge of a Unitarian Congregation there. He did not come till late on the Saturday afternoon before he was to preach; and Mr. Rowe, who himself went down to the coach in a state of anxiety and expectation, to look for the arrival of his successor, could find no one at all answering the description but a round-faced man in a short black coat (like a shooting jacket) which hardly seemed to have been made for him, but who seemed to be talking at a great rate to his fellow-passengers. Mr. Rowe had scarce returned to give an account of his disappointment, when the round-faced man in black entered, and dissipated all doubts on the subject, by beginning to talk. He did not cease while he staid; nor has he since, that I know of. He held the good town of Shrewsbury in delightful suspense for three weeks that he remained there, " fluttering the *proud Salopians* like an eagle in a dove-cote "; and the Welch mountains that skirt the horizon with their tempestuous confusion, agree to have heard no such mystic sounds since the days of

" High-born Hoel's harp or soft Llewellyn's lay!"

As we passed along between W—m and Shrewsbury, and I eyed their blue tops seen through the wintry branches, or the red rustling leaves of the sturdy oak-trees by the road-side, a sound was in my ears as of a Siren's song; I was stunned, startled with it, as from deep sleep; but I had no notion then that I should ever be able to express my admiration to others in motley imagery or quaint allusion, till the light of his genius shone into my soul, like the sun's rays glittering in the puddles of the road. I was at that time dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the way-side, crushed, bleeding, lifeless; but now, bursting the deadly bands that "bound them,

"With Styx nine times round them,"

my ideas float on winged words, and as they expand their plumes, catch the golden light of other years. My soul has indeed remained in its original bondage, dark, obscure, with longings infinite and unsatisfied; my heart, shut up in the prison-house of this rude clay, has never found, nor will it ever find, a heart to speak to; but that my understanding also did not remain dumb and brutish, or at length found a language to express itself, I owe to Coleridge. But this is not to my purpose.

My father lived ten miles from Shrewsbury, and was in the habit of exchanging visits with Mr. Rowe, and with Mr. Jenkins of Witchurch (nine miles farther on) according to the custom of Dissenting Ministers in each other's neighbourhood. A line of communication is thus established, by which the

flame of civil and religious liberty is kept alive, and nourishes its smouldering fire unquenchable, like the fires in the Agamemnon of Æschylus, placed at different stations, that waited for ten long years to announce with their blazing pyramids the destruction of Troy. Coleridge had agreed to come over to see my father according to the courtesy of the country, as Mr. Rowe's probable successor; but in the mean time I had gone to hear him preach the Sunday after his arrival. A poet and a philosopher getting up into a Unitarian pulpit to preach the Gospel, was a romance in these degenerate days, a sort of revival of the primitive spirit of Christianity, which was not to be resisted.

It was in January, 1798, that I rose one morning before day-light, to walk ten miles in the mud, and went to hear this celebrated person preach. Never, the longest day I have to live, shall I have such another walk as this cold, raw, comfortless one, in the winter of the year 1798.—*Il y a des impressions que ni le tems ni les circonstances peuvent effacer. Dusse-je vivre des siècles entiers, le doux tems de ma jeunesse ne peut renatre pour moi, ni s'effacer jamais dans ma mémoire.* When I got there, the organ was playing to 100th psalm, and, when it was done, Mr. Coleridge rose and gave out his text, "And he went up into the mountain to pray, HIMSELF, ALONE." As he gave out this text, his voice "rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes," and when he came to the two last words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the

bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. The idea of St. John came into my mind, " of one crying in the wilderness, who had his loins girt about, and whose food was locusts and wild honey." The preacher then launched into his subject, like an eagle dallying with the wind. The sermon was upon peace and war; upon church and state—not their alliance, but their separation—on the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity, not as the same, but as opposed to one another. He talked of those who had " inscribed the cross of Christ on banners dripping with human gore." He made a poetical and pastoral excursion,—and to shew the fatal effects of war, drew a striking contrast between the simple shepherd boy, driving his team afield, or sitting under the hawthorn, piping to his flock, " as though he should never be old," and the same poor country-lad, crimped, kidnapped, brought into town, made drunk at an alehouse, turned into a wretched drummer-boy, with his hair sticking on end with powder and pomatum, a long cue at his back, and tricked out in the loathsome finery of the profession of blood.

" Such were the notes our once-lov'd poet sung."

And for myself, I could not have been more delighted if I had heard the music of the spheres. Poetry and Philosophy had met together, Truth and Genius had embraced, under the eye and with the sanction of Religion. This was even beyond my hopes. I returned home well satisfied. The sun that was still

labouring pale and wan through the sky, obscured by thick mists, seemed an emblem of the *good cause;* and the cold dank drops of dew that hung half melted on the beard of the thistle, had something genial and refreshing in them; for there was a spirit of hope and youth in all nature, that turned everything into good. The face of nature had not then the brand of JUS DIVINUM on it:

" Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe."

On the Tuesday following, the half-inspired speaker came. I was called down into the room where he was, and went half-hoping, half-afraid. He received me very graciously, and I listened for a long time without uttering a word I did not suffer in his opinion by my silence. " For those two hours," he afterwards was pleased to say, " he was conversing with W. H.'s forehead!" His appearance was different from what I had anticipated from seeing him before. At a distance, and in the dim light of the chapel, there was to me a strange wildness in his aspect, a dusky obscurity, and I thought him pitted with the small-pox. His complexion was at that time clear, and even bright—

" As are the children of yon azure sheen."

His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them like a sea with darkened lustre " A certain tender bloom his face o'erspread," a purple tinge as we see it in the pale thoughtful com-

plexions of the Spanish portrait-painters. Murillo and Velasquéz. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing—like what he has done. It might seem that the genius of his face as from a height surveyed and projected him (with sufficient capacity and huge aspiration) into the world unknown of thought and imagination, with nothing to support or guide his veering purpose, as if Columbus had launched his adventurous course for the New World in a scallop, without oars or compass. So at least I comment on it after the event. Coleridge in his person was rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or like Lord Hamlet, "somewhat fat and pursy." His hair (now, alas! grey) was then black and glossy as the raven's, and fell in smooth masses over his forehead. This long pendulous hair is peculiar to enthusiasts, to those whose minds tend heavenward and is traditionally inseparable (though of a different colour) from the pictures of Christ. It ought to belong, as a character, to all who preach *Christ crucified*, and Coleridge was at that time one of those!

It was curious to observe the contrast between him and my father, who was a veteran in the cause, and then declining into the vale of years. He had been a poor Irish lad, carefully brought up by his parents, and sent to the University of Glasgow (where he studied under Adam Smith) to prepare him for his future destination. It was his mother's proudest wish to see her son a Dissenting Minister.

So if we look back to past generations (as far as eye can reach) we see the same hopes, fears, wishes, followed by the same disappointments, throbbing in the human heart; and so we may see them (if we look forward) rising up for ever, and disappearing, like vapourish bubbles, in the human breast! After being tossed about from congregation to congregation in the heats of the Unitarian controversy, and squabbles about the American war, he had been relegated to an obscure village, where he was to spend the last thirty years of his life, far from the only converse that he loved, the talk about disputed texts of Scripture and the cause of civil and religious liberty. Here he passed his days, repining but resigned, in the study of the Bible, and the perusal of the Commentators,—huge folios, not easily got through, one of which would outlast a winter! Why did he pore on these from morn to night (with the exception of a walk in the fields or a turn in the garden to gather brocoli-plants or kidney beans of his own rearing, with no small degree of pride and pleasure)?—Here were "no figures nor no fantasies,"—neither poetry nor philosophy—nothing to dazzle, nothing to excite modern curiosity; but to his lack-lustre eyes there appeared, within the pages of the ponderous, unwieldy, neglected tomes, the sacred name of JEHOVAH in Hebrew capitals: pressed down by the weight of the style, worn to the last fading thinness of the understanding, there were glimpses, glimmering notions of the patriarchal wanderings, with palm-trees hovering in the horizon, and processions of camels at the distance of three thousand years; there was Moses with the

Burning Bush, number of the Twelve Tribes, types, shadows, glosses on the law and the prophets; there were discussions (dull enough) on the age of Methuselah, a mighty speculation! There were outlines, rude guesses at the shape of Noah's Ark and of the riches of Solomon's Temple; questions as to the date of the creation, predictions of the end of all things; the great lapses of time, the strange mutations of the globe were unfolded with the voluminous leaf, as it turned over; and though the soul might slumber with an hieroglyphic veil of inscrutable mysteries drawn over it, yet it was in a slumber ill-exchanged for all the sharpened realities of sense, wit, fancy, or reason. My father's life was comparatively a dream; but it was a dream of infinity and eternity, of death, the resurrection, and a judgment to come!

No two individuals were ever more unlike than were the host and his guest. A poet was to my father a sort of nondescript: yet whatever added grace to the Unitarian cause was to him welcome. He could hardly have been more surprised or pleased, if our visitor had worn wings. Indeed, his thoughts had wings; and as the silken sounds rustled round our little wainscoted parlour, my father threw back his spectacles over his forehead, his white hairs mixing with its sanguine hue; and a smile of delight beamed across his rugged cordial face, to think that Truth had found a new ally in fancy!* . Besides,

* My father was one of those who mistook his talent after all. He used to be very much dissatisfied that I preferred his Letters to his Sermons. The last were forced and dry; the

Coleridge seemed to take considerable notice of me, and that of itself was enough. He talked very familiarly, but agreeably, and glanced over a variety of subjects. At dinner-time he grew more animated, and dilated in a very edifying manner on Mary Wolstonecraft and Mackintosh. The last, he said, he considered (on my father's speaking of his *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* as a capital performance) as a clever scholastic man—a master of the topics,—or as the ready warehouseman of letters, who knew exactly where to lay his hand on what he wanted, though the goods were not his own. He thought him no match for Burke, either in style or matter. Burke was a metaphysician, Mackintosh a mere logician. Burke was an orator (almost a poet) who reasoned in figures, because he had an eye for nature: Mackintosh, on the other hand, was a rhetorician, who had only an eye to common places. On this I ventured to say that I had always entertained a great opinion of Burke, and that (as far as I could find) the speaking of him with contempt might be made the test of a vulgar democratical mind. This was the first observation I ever made to Coleridge, and he said it was a very just and striking one. I remember the leg of Welsh mutton and the turnips on the table that day had the finest flavour imaginable. Coleridge added that Mackintosh and Tom Wedgwood (of whom, however, he spoke highly) had

first came naturally from him. For ease, half-plays on words, and a supine, monkish, indolent pleasantry, I have never seen them equalled.

expressed a very indifferent opinion of his friend Mr. Wordsworth, on which he remarked to them, "He strides on so far before you, that he dwindles in the distance!" Godwin had once boasted to him of having carried on an argument with Mackintosh for three hours with dubious success; Coleridge told him, "If there had been a man of genius in the room, he would have settled the qestion in five minutes." He asked me if I had ever seen Mary Wolstonecraft and I said, I had once for a few moments, and that she seemed to me to turn off Godwin's objections to something she advanced with quite a playful, easy air. He replied, that "this was only one instance of the ascendancy which people of imagination exercised over those of mere intellect." He did not rate Godwin very high* (this was caprice or prejudice, real or affected) but he had a great idea of Mrs. Wolstonecraft's powers of conversation, none at all of her talent for book-making. We talked a little about Holcroft. He had been asked if he was not much struck *with* him, and he said, he thought himself in more danger of being struck *by* him. I complained that he would not let me get on at all, for he required a definition of every the commonest word, exclaiming, "What do you mean by a *sensation*, Sir? What do you mean by an *idea?*" This, Coleridge said, was barricadoing the road to truth: it was set-

* He complained in particular of the presumption of his attempting to establish the future immortality of man, "without" (as he said) "knowing what Death was or what Life was"—and the tone in which he pronounced these two words seemed to convey a complete image of both.

ting up a turnpike-gate at every step we took. I forget a great number of things, many more than I remember; but the day passed off pleasantly, and the next morning Mr. Coleridge was to return to Shrewsbury. When I came down to breakfast, I found that he had just received a letter from his friend, T. Wedgwood, making him an offer of 150*l.* a year if he chose to waive his present pursuit, and devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy. Coleridge seemed to make up his mind to close with this proposal in the act of tying on one of his shoes. It threw an additional damp on his departure. It took the wayward enthusiast quite from us to cast him into Deva's winding vales, or by the shores of old romance. Instead of living at ten miles distance, of being the pastor of a Dissenting congregation at Shrewsbury, he was henceforth to inhabit the Hill of Parnassus, to be a shepherd on the Delectable Mountains. Alas! I knew not the way thither, and felt very little gratitude for Mr. Wedgwood's bounty. I was presently relieved from this dilemma; for Mr. Coleridge, asking for a pen and ink, and going to a table to write something on a bit of card, advanced towards me with undulating step, and giving me the precious document, said that that was his address, *Mr. Coleridge, Nether Stowey, Somersetshire;* and that he should be glad to see me there in a few weeks' time, and, if I chose, would come half-way to meet me. I was not less surprised than the shepherd-boy (this simile is to be found in Cassandra) when he sees a thunderbolt fall, close at his feet. I stammered out my acknowledgments and

aceptance of this offer (I thought Mr. Wedgwood's annuity a trifle to it) as well as I could; and this mighty business being settled, the poet-preacher took leave, and I accompanied him six miles on the road. It was a fine morning in the middle of winter, and he talked the whole way. The scholar in Chaucer is described as going

—" Sounding on his way."

So Coleridge went on his. In digressing, in dilating, in passing from subject to subject, he appeared to me to float in air, to slide on ice. He told me in confidence (going along) that he should have preached two sermons before he accepted the situation at Shrewsbury, one on Infant Baptism, the other on the Lord's Supper, shewing that he could not administer either, which would have effectually disqualified him for the object in view. I observed that he continually crossed me on the way by shifting from one side of the foot-path to the other. This struck me as an odd movement; but I did not at that time connect it with any instability of purpose or involuntary change of principle, as I have done since. He seemed unable to keep on in a straight line. He spoke slightingly of Hume (whose Essay on Miracles he said was stolen from an objection started in one of South's sermons—*Credat Judæus Appella!*). I was not very much pleased at this account of Hume, for I had just been reading, with infinite relish, that completest of all metaphysical choke-pears, his *Treatise on Human Nature*, to which the *Essays*, in

point of scholastic subtlety and close reasoning, are mere elegant trifling, light summer-reading. Coleridge even denied the excellence of Hume's general style, which I think betrayed a want of taste or candour. He however made me amends by the manner in which he spoke of Berkeley. He dwelt particularly on his *Essay on Vision* as a masterpiece of analytical reasoning. So it undoubtedly is. He was exceedingly angry with Dr. Johnson for striking the stone with his foot, in allusion to this author's Theory of Matter and Spirit, and saying, "Thus I confute him, Sir." Coleridge drew a parallel (I don't know how he brought about the connection) between Bishop Berkeley and Tom Paine. He said the one was an instance of a subtle, the other of an acute mind, than which no two things could be more distinct. The one was a shop-boy's quality, the other the characteristic of a philosopher. He considered Bishop Butler as a true philosopher, a profound and conscientious thinker, a genuine reader of nature and of his own mind. He did not speak of his *Analogy*, but of his *Sermons at the Rolls' Chapel*, of which I had never heard. Coleridge somehow always contrived to prefer the *unknown* to the *known*. In this instance he was right. The *Analogy* is a tissue of sophistry of wire-drawn, theological special-pleading; the *Sermons* (with the Preface to them) are in a fine vein of deep, matured reflection, a candid appeal to our observation of human nature, without pedantry and without bias. I told Coleridge I had written a few remarks, and was sometimes foolish enough to believe that I had made a discovery on the

same subject (the *Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind*)—and I tried to explain my view of it to Coleridge, who listened with great willingness, but I did not succeed in making myself understood. I sat down to the task shortly afterwards for the twentieth time, got new pens and paper, determined to make clear work of it, wrote a few meagre sentences in the skeleton-style of a mathematical demonstration, stopped half-way down the second page; and, after trying in vain to pump up any words, images, notions, apprehensions, facts or observations from that gulph of abstraction in which I had plunged myself for four or five years preceding, gave up the attempt as labour in vain, and shed tears of helpless despondency on the blank unfinished paper. I can write fast enough now. Am I better than I was then? Oh no! One truth discovered, one pang of regret at not being able to express it, is better than all the fluency and flippancy in the world. Would that I could go back to what I then was! Why can we not revive past times as we can revisit old places? If I had the quaint Muse of Sir Philip Sidney to assist me, I would write a *Sonnet to the Road between W—m and Shrewsbury*, and immortalise every step of it by some fond enigmatical conceit. I would swear that the very milestones had ears, and that Harmer-hill stooped with all its pines, to listen to a poet, as he passed! I remember but one other topic of discourse in this walk. He mentioned Paley, praised the naturalness and clearness of his style, but condemned his sentiments, thought him a mere time-serving casuist, and said that "the fact of his work

on Moral and Political Philosophy being made a text-book in our Universities was a disgrace to the national character." We parted at the six-mile stone; and I returned homeward pensive but much pleased. I had met with unexpected notice from a person, whom I believed to have been prejudiced against me. "Kind and affable to me had been his condescension, and should be honoured ever with suitable regard." He was the first poet I had known, and he certainly answered to that inspired name. I had heard a great deal of his powers of conversation and was not disappointed. In fact, I never met with any thing at all like them, either before or since. I could easily credit the accounts which were circulated of his holding forth to a large party of ladies and gentlemen. an evening or two before, on the Berkeleian Theory, when he made the whole material universe look like a transparency of fine words; and another story (which I believe he has somewhere told himself) of his being asked to a party at Birmingham, of his smoking tobacco and going to sleep after dinner on a sofa, where the company found him to their no small surprise, which was increased to wonder when he started up of a sudden. and rubbing his eyes, looked about him. and launched into a three-hours' description of the third heaven. of which he had had a dream, very different from Mr. Southey's Vision of Judgment, and also from that other Vision of Judgment, which Mr. Murray, the Secretary of the Bridge-street Junto, has taken into his especial keeping!

On my way back, I had a sound in my ears, it

was the voice of Fancy: I had a light before me, it was the face of Poetry. The one still lingers there, the other has not quitted my side! Coleridge in truth met me half-way on the ground of philosophy, or I should not have been won over to his imaginative creed. I had an uneasy, pleasurable sensation all the time, till I was to visit him. During those months the chill breath of winter gave me a welcoming; vernal air was balm and inspiration to me. The golden sun-sets, the silver star of evening, lighted me on my way to new hopes and prospects. *I was to visit Coleridge in the spring.* This circumstance was never absent from my thoughts, and mingled with all my feelings. I wrote to him at the time proposed, and received an answer postponing my intended visit for a week or two, but very cordially urging me to complete my promise then. This delay did not damp, but rather increase my ardour. In the mean time, I went to Llangollen Vale, by way of initiating myself in the mysteries of natural scenery; and I must say I was enchanted with it. I had been reading Coleridge's description of England, in his fine *Ode on the Departing Year*, and I applied it, *con amore*, to the objects before me. That valley was to me (in a manner) the cradle of a new existence: in the river that winds through it, my spirit was baptised in the waters of Helicon!

I returned home, and soon after set out on my journey with unworn heart and untired feet. My way lay through Worcester and Gloucester, and by Upton, where I thought of Tom Jones and the adventure of the muff. I remember getting completely

wet through one day, and stopping at an inn (I think it was at Tewkesbury) where I sat up all night to read *Paul and Virginia.* Sweet were the showers in early youth that drenched my body, and sweet the drops of pity that fell upon the books I read! I recollect a remark of Coleridge's upon this very book, that nothing could shew the gross indelicacy of French manners and the entire corruption of their imagination more strongly than the behaviour of the heroine in the last fatal scene, who turns away from a person on board the sinking vessel, that offers to save her life, because he has thrown off his clothes to assist him in swimming. Was this a time to think of such a circumstance? I once hinted to Wordsworth, as we were sailing in his boat on Grasmere lake, that I thought he had borrowed the idea of his *Poems on the Naming of Places* from the local inscriptions of the same kind in *Paul and Virginia.* He did not own the obligation, and stated some distinction without a difference, in defence of his claim to originality. Any the slightest variation would be sufficient for this purpose in his mind; for whatever *he* added or omitted would inevitably be worth all that any one else had done, and contain the marrow of the sentiment. I was still two days before the time fixed for my arrival, for I had taken care to set out early enough. I stopped these two days at Bridgewater, and when I was tired of sauntering on the banks of its muddy river, returned to the inn, and read *Camilla.* So have I loitered my life away, reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on what pleased me best

I have wanted only one thing to make me happy; but wanting that, have wanted every thing!

I arrived, and was well received. The country about Nether Stowey is beautiful, green and hilly, and near the sea-shore. I saw it by the other day, after an interval of twenty years, from a hill near Taunton. How was the map of my life spread out before me, as the map of the country lay at my feet! In the afternoon, Coleridge took me over to All-Foxden, a romantic old family-mansion of the St. Aubins, where Wordsworth lived. It was then in the possession of a friend of the poet's who gave him the free use of it. Somehow that period (the time just after the French Revolution) was not a time when *nothing was given for nothing.* The mind opened, and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals, beneath "the scales that fence" our self-interest. Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the *Lyrical Ballads,* which were still in manuscript, or in the form of *Sybilline Leaves.* I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family-portraits of the age of George I and II and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day, could

—"hear the loud stag speak."

In the outset of life (and particularly at this time

I felt it so) our imagination has a body to it. We are in a state between sleeping and waking, and have indistinct but glorious glimpses of strange shapes, and there is always something to come better than what we see. (As in our dreams the fulness of the blood gives warmth and reality to the coinage of the brain, so in youth our ideas are clothed, and fed, and pampered with our good spirits; we breathe thick with thoughtless happiness, the weight of future years presses on the strong pulses of the heart, and we repose with undisturbed faith in truth and good. As we advance, we exhaust our fund of enjoyment and of hope.) We are no longer wrapped in *lamb's-wool*, lulled in Elysium. As we taste the pleasures of life, their spirit evaporates, the sense palls; and nothing is left but the phantoms, the lifeless shadows of what *has been*!

That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash-tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud, with a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of *Betty Foy*. I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the *Thorn*, the *Mad Mother*, and the *Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman*, I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since acknowledged,

"In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,"

as the characteristics of this author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me.

It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of Spring,

> " While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed."

Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high

> " Of Providence, foreknowledge. will, and fate.
> Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,"

as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the summer moonlight! He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to belief in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a *matter-of-fact-ness*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the goldlfinch sang. He said, however (if I remember right), that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces, that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description

of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the *costume* of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own Peter Bell. There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance) and intense high narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantrey's bust wants the marking traits; but he was teazed into making it regular and heavy: Haydon's head of him, introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*, like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and said triumphantly that "his marriage with experience had not been so unproductive as Mr. Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life." He had been to see the *Castle Spectre* by Monk Lewis, while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said "it fitted the taste of the audience like a glove." This *ad captandum* merit was however by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather

than court popular effect. Wordsworth, looking out of the low, latticed window, said, "How beautifully the sun sets on that yellow bank!" I thought within myself, "With what eyes these poets see nature!" and ever after, when I saw the sun-set stream upon the objects facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, or thanked Mr. Wordsworth for having made one for me! We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of Peter Bell in the open air; and the comment upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, "his face was as a book where men might read strange matters," and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambigious accompaniment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained. and internal. The one might be termed more *dramatic*, the other more *lyrical.* Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse wood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down a strait gravel-walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption. Returning that same evening, I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of

the nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible. Thus I passed three weeks at Nether Stowey and in the neighbourhood, generally devoting the afternoons to a delightful chat in an arbour made of bark by the poet's friend Tom Poole, sitting under two fine elm-trees, and listening to the bees humming round us, while we quaffed our *flip*. It was agreed, among other things, that we should make a jaunt down the Bristol Channel, as far as Linton. We set off together on foot, Coleridge, John Chester, and I. This Chester was a native of Nether Stowey, one of those who were attracted to Coleridge's discourse as flies are to honey, or bees in swarming-time to the sound of a brass pan. He "followed in the chace, like a dog who hunts, not like one that made up the cry." He had on a brown cloth coat, boots, and corduroy breeches, was low in stature, bow-legged, had a drag in his walk like a drover, which he assisted by a hazel switch, and kept on a sort of trot by the side of Coleridge, like a running footman by a state coach, that he might not lose a syllable or sound, that fell from Coleridge's lips. He told me his private opinion, that Coleridge was a wonderful man. He scarcely opened his lips, much less offered an opinion the whole way: yet of the three, had I to chuse during that journey, I would be John Chester. He afterwards followed Coleridge into Germany, where the Kantean philosophers were puzzled how to bring him under any of their categories. When he sat down at table with his idol, John's felicity was complete; Sir Walter

Scott's or Mr. Blackwood's, when they sat down at the same table with the King, was not more so. We passed Dunster on our right, a small town between the brow of a hill and the sea. I remember eyeing it wistfully as it lay below us: contrasted with the woody scene around it looked as clear, as pure, as *embrowned* and ideal as any landscape I have seen since, of Gasper Poussin's or Domenichino's. We had a long day's march—(our feet kept time to the echoes of Coleridge's tongue)—through Minehead and by the Blue Anchor, and on to Linton, which we did not reach till near midnight, and where we had some difficulty in making a lodgment. We however knocked the people of the house up at last, and we were repaid for our apprehensions and fatigue by some excellent rashers of fried bacon and eggs. The view in coming along had been splendid. We walked for miles and miles on dark brown heaths overlooking the channel. with the Welsh hills beyond, and at times descended into little sheltered valleys close by the sea side, with a smuggler's face scowling by us, and then had to ascend conical hills with a path winding up through a coppice to a barren top, like a monk's shaven crown, from one of which I pointed out to Coleridge's notice the bare masts of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon and within the red-orbed disk of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship in the *Ancient Mariner*. At Linton the character of the sea-coast becomes more marked and rugged. There is a place called the *Valley of Rocks* (I suspect this was only the poetical name for it) bedded among precipices overhanging the sea, with rocky

caverns beneath, into which the waves dash, and where the sea-gull for ever wheels its screaming flight. On the tops of these are huge stones thrown transverse, as if an earthquake had tossed them there, and behind these is a fretwork of perpendicular rocks, something like the *Giant's Causeway*. A thunder-storm came on while we were at the inn, and Coleridge was running out bare-headed to enjoy the commotion of the elements in the *Valley of Rocks*, but, as if in spite, the clouds only muttered a few angry sounds, and let fall a few refreshing drops. Coleridge told me that he and Wordsworth were to have made this place the scene of a prose-tale, which was to have been in the manner of, but far superior to, the *Death of Abel*, but they had relinquished the design. In the morning of the second day, we breakfasted luxuriously in an old-fashioned parlour, on tea, toast, eggs, and honey, in the very sight of the bee-hives from which it had been taken, and a garden full of thyme and wild flowers that had produced it. On this occasion Coleridge spoke of Virgil's *Georgics*, but not well. I do not think he had much feeling for the classical or elegant. It was in this room that we found a little worn-out copy of the *Seasons*, lying in a window-seat, on which Coleridge exclaimed, "*That* is true fame!" He said Thomson was a great poet, rather than a good one; his style was as meretricious as his thoughts were natural. He spoke of Cowper as the best modern poet. He said the *Lyrical Ballads* were an experiment about to be tried by him and Wordsworth, to see how far the public taste would endure poetry

written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II. Some comparison was introduced between Shakespeare and Milton. He said "he hardly knew which to prefer. Shakespeare appeared to him a mere stripling in the art; he was as tall and as strong, with infinitely more activity than Milton, but he never appeared to have come to man's estate; or if he had, he would not have been a man, but a monster."* He spoke with contempt of Gray, and with intolerance of Pope. He did not like the versification of the latter. He observed that "the ears of these couplet-writers might be charged with having short memories, that could not retain the harmony of whole passages." He thought little of Junius as a writer; he had a dislike of Dr. Johnson; and a much higher opinion of Burke as an orator and politician, than of Fox or Pitt. He however thought him very inferior in richness of style and imagery to some of our elder prose-writers, particularly Jeremy Taylor. He liked Richardson, but not Fielding; nor could I get him to enter into the merits of *Caleb Williams*.* In

* He had no idea of pictures, of Claude or Raphael, and at this time I had as little as he. He sometimes gives a striking account at present of the cartoons at Pisa, by Buffamalco and others; of one in particular, where Death is seen in the air brandishing his scythe, and the great and mighty of the earth shudder at his approach, while the beggars and the wretched

short, he was profound and discriminating with respect to those authors whom he liked, and where he gave his judgment fair play; capricious, perverse, and prejudiced in his antipathies and distastes. We loitered on the "ribbed sea-sands," in such talk as this, a whole morning, and I recollect met with a curious sea-weed, of which John Chester told us the country name! A fisherman gave Coleridge an account of a boy that had been drowned the day before, and that they had tried to save him at the risk of their own lives. He said "he did not know how it was that they ventured, but, Sir, we have a *nature* towards one another." This expression, Coleridge remarked to me, was a fine illustration of that theory of disinterestedness which I (in common with Butler) had adopted I broached to him an argument of mine to prove that *likeness* was not mere association of ideas. I said that the mark in the sand put one in mind of a man's foot. not because it was part of a former impression of a man's foot (for it was quite new) but because it was like the shape of a man's foot. He assented to the justness of this distinction (which I have explained at length elsewhere, for the benefit of the curious) and John Chester listened; not from any interest in the subject, but because he was astonished that I should be able to suggest any thing to Coleridge that he did not already know. We returned on the third morning, and Coleridge remarked the silent cottage-smoke curling up the valleys where,

kneel to him as their deliverer. He would of course understand so broad and fine a moral as this at any time.

a few evenings before, we had seen the lights gleaming through the dark.

In a day or two after we arrived at Stowey we set out, I on my return home, and he for Germany. It was a Sunday morning, and he was to preach that day for Dr. Toulmin of Taunton. I asked him if he had prepared any thing for the occasion. He said he had not even thought of the text, but should as soon as we parted. I did not go to hear him,—this was a fault,—but we met in the evening at Bridgewater. The next day we had a long day's walk to Bristol, and sat down, I recollect, by a well-side on the road; to cool ourselves and satisfy our thirst, when Coleridge repeated to me some descriptive lines from his tragedy of Remorse; which I must say became his mouth and that occasion better than they, some years after, did Mr. Elliston's and the Drury-lane boards,—

"Oh memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,
And give those scenes thine everlasting life."

I saw no more of him for a year or two, during which period he had been wandering in the Hartz Forest in Germany; and his return was cometary, meteorous, unlike his setting out. It was not till some time after that I knew his friends Lamb and Southey. The last always appears to me (as I first saw him) with a common-place book under his arm, and the first with a *bon-mot* in his mouth. It was at Godwin's that I met him with Holcroft

and Coleridge, where they were disputing fiercely which was the best—*Man as he was, or man as he is to be.* "Give me," says Lamb, "man as he is, *not* to be." This saying was the beginning of a friendship between us, which I believe still continues.—Enough of this for the present.

> "But there is matter for another rhyme,
> And I to this may add a second tale."

OF THE LIBERTY OF THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

The time, it is to be hoped, is gone by, when any defence would be necessary of the "liberty of the press" as one of the securities against corrupt or tyrannical government. No argument, we may suppose, can now be needed, against permitting a legislature or an executive, not identified in interest with the people, to prescribe opinions to them, and determine what doctrines or what arguments they shall be allowed to hear. This aspect of the question, besides, has been so often and so triumphantly enforced by preceding writers, that it needs not be specially insisted on in this place. Though the law of England, on the subject of the press, is as servile to this day as it was in the time of the Tudors, there is little danger of its being actually put in force against political discussion, except during some temporary panic, when fear of insurrection drives ministers and judges from their propriety; and, speaking generally, it is not, in constitutional countries, to be apprehended, that the government, whether completely responsible to the people or not, will often attempt to control the expression of opinion, except when in doing so it makes itself the organ of the general intolerance of the public. Let us suppose, therefore, that the government is entirely at

one with the people, and never thinks of exerting any power of coercion unless in agreement with what it conceives to be their voice. But I deny the right of the people to exercise such coercion, either by themselves or by their government. The power itself is illegitimate. The best government has no more title to it than the worst. It is as noxious, or more noxious, when exerted in accordance with public opinion, than when in opposition to it. If all mankind, minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind. Were an opinion a personal possession of no value except to the owner; if to be obstructed in the enjoyment of it were simply a private injury, it would make some difference whether the injury was inflicted only on a few persons or on many. But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

It is necessary to consider separately these two hypotheses, each of which has a distinct branch of the argument corresponding to it. We can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavouring to

stifle is a false opinion; and if we were sure, stifling it would be an evil still.

First: the opinion which it is attempted to suppress by authority may possibly be true. Those who desire to suppress it, of course deny its truth; but they are not infallible. They have no authority to decide the question for all mankind, and exclude every other person from the means of judging. To refuse a hearing to an opinion, because they are sure that it is false, is to assume that *their* certainty is the same thing as *absolute* certainty. All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility, Its condemnation may be allowed to rest on this common argument, not the worse for being common.

Unfortunately for the good sense of mankind, the fact of their fallibility is far from carrying the weight in their practical judgment, which is always allowed to it in theory; for while every one well knows himself to be fallible, few think it necessary to take any precautions against their own fallibility, or admit the supposition that any opinion, of which they feel very certain, may be one of the examples of the error to which they acknowledge themselves to be liable. Absolute princes, or others who are accustomed to unlimited deference, usually feel this complete confidence in their own opinions on nearly all subjects. People more happily situated, who sometimes hear their opinions disputed, and are not wholly unused to be set right when they are wrong, place the same unbounded reliance only on such of their opinions as are shared by all who surround

them, or to whom they habitually defer: for in proportion to a man's want of confidence in his own solitary judgment, does he usually repose, with implicit trust, on the infallibility of "the world" in general. And the world, to each individual, means the part of it, with which he comes in contact: his party, his sect, his church, his class of society; the man may be called, by comparison, almost liberal and large-minded to whom it means anything so comprehensive as his own country or his own age. Nor is his faith in this collective authority at all shaken by his being aware that other ages, countries, sects, churches, classes, and parties have thought, and even now think, the exact reverse. He devolves upon his own world the responsibility of being in the right against the dissentient worlds of other people; and it never troubles him that mere accident has decided which of these numerous worlds is the object of his reliance, and that the same causes which make him a Churchman in London, would have made him a Buddhist or a Confucian in Pekin. Yet it is as evident in itself, as any amount of argument can make it, that ages are no more infallible than individuals; every age having held many opinions which subsequent ages have deemed not only false but absurd; and it is as certain that many opinions, now general, will be rejected by future ages, as it is that many, once general, are rejected by the present.

The objection likely to be made to this argument, would probably take some such form as the following. There is no greater assumption of

infallibility in forbidding the propagation of error, than in any other thing which is done by public authority on its own judgment and responsibility. Judgment is given to men that they may use it. Because it may be used erroneously, are men to be told that they ought not to use it at all? To prohibit what they think pernicious, is not claiming exemption from error, but fulfilling the duty incumbent on them, although fallible, of acting on their conscientious conviction. If we were never to act on our opinions, because those opinions may be wrong, we should leave all our interests uncared for, and all our duties unperformed. An objection which applies to all conduct, can be no valid objection to any conduct in particular. It is the duty of governments, and of individuals, to form the truest opinions they can; to form them carefully, and never impose them upon others unless they are quite sure of being right. But when they are sure (such reasoners may say), it is not conscientiousness but cowardice to shrink from acting on their opinions, and allow doctrines which they honestly think dangerous to the welfare of mankind, either in this life or in another, to be scattered abroad without restraint, because other people, in less enlightened times, have persecuted opinions now believed to be true. Let us take care, it may be said, not to make the same mistake: but governments and nations have made mistakes in other things which are not denied to be fit subjects for the exercise of authority: they have laid on bad taxes, made unjust wars. Ought we therefore to lay on no

taxes, and, under whatever provocation, make no wars? Men, and governments, must act to the best of their ability. There is no such thing as absolute certainty, but there is assurance sufficient for the purposes of human life. We may, and must, assume our opinion to be true for the guidance of our own conduct; and it is assuming no more when we forbid bad men to pervert society by the propagation of opinions which we regard as false and pernicious.

I answer, that it is assuming very much more. There is the greatest difference between presuming an opinion to be true, because, with every opportunity for contesting it, it has not been refuted, and assuming its truth for the purpose of not permitting its refutation. Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion, is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right.

When we consider either the history of opinion, or the ordinary conduct of human life, to what is it to be ascribed that the one and the other are no worse than they are? Not certainly to the inherent force of the human understanding; for, on any matter not self-evident, there are ninety-nine persons totally incapable of judging of it, for one who is capable; and the capacity of the hundredth person is only comparative; for the majority of the eminent men of every past generation held many opinions now known to be erroneous, and did or approved numerous things which no one will now

justify. Why is it, then, that there is on the whole a preponderance among mankind of rational opinions and rational conduct? If there really is this preponderance—which there must be unless human affairs are, and have always been, in an almost desperate state—it is owing to a quality of the human mind, the source of everything respectable in man either as an intellectual or as a moral being, namely, that his errors are corrigible. He is capable of rectifying his mistakes, by discussion and experience. Not by experience alone. There must be discussion, to show how experience is to be interpreted. Wrong opinions and practices gradually yield to fact and argument: but facts and arguments, to produce any effect on the mind, must be brought before it. Very few facts are able to tell their own story, without comments to bring out their meaning. The whole strength and value, then, of human judgment, depending on the one property, that it can be set right when it is wrong, reliance can be placed on it only when the means of setting it right are kept constantly at hand. In the case of any person whose judgment is really deserving of confidence, how has it become so? Because he has kept his mind open to criticism of his opinions and conduct. Because it has been his practice to listen to all that could be said against him; to profit by as much of it as was just, and expound to himself, and upon occasion to others, the fallacy of what was fallacious. Because he has felt, that the only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing

the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind. No wise man ever acquired his wisdom in any mode but this; nor is it in the nature of human intellect to become wise in any other manner. The steady habit of correcting and completing his own opinion by collating it with those of others, so far from causing doubt and hesitation in carrying it into practice, is the only stable foundation for a just reliance on it: for, being cognisant of all that can, at least obviously, be said against him, and having taken up his position against all gainsayers—knowing that he has sought for objections and difficulties, instead of avoiding them, and has shut out no light which can be thrown upon the subject from any quarter—he has a right to think his judgment better than that of any person, or any multitude, who have not gone through a similar process.

It is not too much to require that what the wisest of mankind, those who are best entitled to trust their own judgment, find necessary to warrant their relying on it, should be submitted to by that miscellaneous collection of a few wise and many foolish individuals, called the public. The most intolerant of churches, the Roman Catholic Church, even at the canonisation of a saint, admits, and listens patiently to, a "devil's advocate." The holiest of men, it appears, cannot be admitted to posthumous honours, until all that the devil could say against him is known and weighed. If even the

Newtonian philosophy were not permitted to be questioned, mankind could not feel as complete assurance of its truth as they now do. The beliefs which we have most warrant for, have no safeguard to rest on, but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded. If the challenge is not accepted, or is accepted and the attempt fails, we are far enough from certainty still; but we have done the best that the existing state of human reason admits of; we have neglected nothing that could give the truth a chance of reaching us: if the lists are kept open, we may hope that if there be a better truth, it will be found when the human mind is capable of receiving it; and in the meantime we may rely on having attained such approach to truth as is possible in our own day. This is the amount of certainty attainable by a fallible being, and this the sole way of attaining it.

Strange it is, that men should admit the validity of the arguments for free discussion, but object to their being " pushed to an extreme "; not seeing that unless the reasons are good for an extreme case, they are not good for any case. Strange that they should imagine that they are not assuming infallibility, when they acknowledge that there should be free discussion on all subjects which can possibly be *doubtful*, but think that some particular principle or doctrine should be forbidden to be questioned because it is so *certain*, that is, because *they are certain* that it is certain. To call any proposition certain, while there is any one who would deny its certainty if permitted, but who is not permitted, is to assume

that we ourselves, and those who agree with us, are the judges of certainty, and judges without hearing the other side.

In the present age—which has been described as " destitute of faith, but terrified at scepticism " —in which people feel sure, not so much that their opinions are true, as that they should not know what to do without them—the claims of an opinion to be protected from public attack are rested not so much on its truth, as on its importance to society. There are, it is alleged, certain beliefs so useful, not to say indispensable, to well-being that it is as much the duty of governments to uphold those beliefs, as to protect any other of the interests of society. In a case of such necessity, and so directly in the line of their duty, something less than infallibility may, it is maintained, warrant, and even bind, governments to act on their own opinion, confirmed by the general opinion of mankind. It is also often argued, and still oftener thought, that none but bad men would desire to weaken these salutary beliefs; and there can be nothing wrong, it is thought, in restraining bad men, and prohibiting what only such men would wish to practise. This mode of thinking makes the justification of restraints on discussion not a question of the truth of doctrines, but of their usefulness; and flatters itself by that means to escape the responsibility of claiming to be an infallible judge of opinions. But those who thus satisfy themselves, do not perceive that the assumption of infallibility is merely shifted from one point to another. The usefulness of an opinion is itself matter of opinion: as dispu-

table, as open to discussion, and requiring discussion as much, as the opinion itself. There is the same need of an infallible judge of opinoins to decide an opinion to be noxious, as to decide it to be false, unless the opinion condemned has full opportunity of defending itself. And it will not do to say that the heretic may be allowed to maintain the utility or harmlessness of his opinion, though forbidden to maintain its truth. The truth of an opinion is part of its utility. If we would know whether or not it is desirable that a proposition should be believed, is it possible to exclude the consideration of whether or not it is true? In the opinion, not of bad men, but of the best men, no belief which is contrary to truth can be really useful: and can you prevent such men from urging that plea, when they are charged with culpability for denying some doctrine which they are told is useful, but which they believe to be false? Those who are on the side of received opinions, never fail to take all possible advantage of this plea; you do not find *them* handling the question of utility as if it could be completely abstracted from that of truth: on the contrary, it is, above all, because their doctrine is "the truth," that the knowledge or the belief of it is held to be so indispensable. There can be no fair discussion of the question of usefulness, when an argument so vital may be employed on one side, but not on the other. And in point of fact, when law or public feeling do not permit the truth of an opinion to be disputed, they are just as little tolerant of a denial of its usefulness. The utmost they allow is an extenuation of its

absolute necessity, or of the positive guilt of rejecting it.

In order more fully to illustrate the mischief of denying a hearing to opinions because we, in our own judgment, have condemned them, it will be desirable to fix down the discussion to a concrete case; and I choose, by preference, the cases which are least favourable to me—in which the argument against freedom of opinion, both on the score of truth and on that of utility, is considered the strongest. Let the opinions impugned be the belief in a God and in a future state, or any of the commonly received doctrines of morality. To fight the battle on such ground, gives a great advantage to an unfair antagonist; since he will be sure to say (and many who have no desire to be unfair will say it internally): Are these the doctrines which you do not deem sufficiently certain to be taken under the portection of law? Is the belief in a God one of the opinions, to feel sure of which, you hold to be assuming infallibility? But I must be permitted to observe, that it is not the feeling sure of a doctrine (be it what it may) which I call an assumption of infallibility. It is the undertaking to decide that question *for others*. without allowing them to hear what can be said on the contrary side. And I denounce and reprobate this pretension not the less, if put forth on the side of my most solemn convictions. However positive any one's persuasion may be, not only of the falsity but of the pernicious consequences—not only of the pernicious consequences but (to adopt expressions which I altogether condemn) the immorality and

impiety of an opinion; yet if, in pursuance of that private judgment, though backed by the public judgment of his country or his contemporaries, he prevents the opinion from being heard in its defence, he assumes infallibility. And so far from the assumption being less objectionable or less dangerous because the opinion is called immoral or impious, this is the case of all others in which it is most fatal. These are exactly the occasions on which the men of one generation commit those dreadful mistakes, which excite the astonishment and horror of posterity. It is among such that we find the instances memorable in history, when the arm of the law has been employed to root out the best men and the noblest doctrines; with deplorable success as to the men, though some of the doctrines have survived to be (as if in mockery) invoked, in defence of similar conduct towards those who dissent from *them* or from their received interpretation.

Mankind can hardly be too often reminded, that there was once a man named Socrates, between whom and the legal authorities and public opinion of his time, there took place a memorable collision. Born in an age and country abounding in individual greatness, this man has been handed down to us by those who best knew both him and the age, as the most virtuous man in it; while *we* know him as the head and prototype of all subsequent teachers of virtue, the source equally of the lofty inspiration of Plato and the judicious utilitarianism of Aristotle, "*i maëstri di color che sanno*," the two headsprings of ethical as of all other philosophy. This

acknowledged master of all the eminent thinkers who have since lived—whose fame, still growing after more than two thousand years, all but outweights the whole remainder of the names which make his native city illustrious—was put to death by his countrymen, after a judicial conviction, for impiety and immorality. Impiety, in denying the gods recognised by the State; indeed his accuser asserted (see the " Apologia ") that he believed in no gods at all. Immorality, in being. by his doctrines and instructions, a " corruptor of youth." Of these charges the tribunal, there is every ground for believing, honestly found him guilty, and condemned the man, who probably of all then born had deserved best of mankind, to be put to death as a criminal.

To pass from this to the only other instance of judicial iniquity, the mention of which, after the condemnation of Socrates, would not be an anticlimax: the event which took place on Calvary rather more than eighteen hundred years ago. The man who left on the memory of those who witnesesd his life and conversation, such an impression of his moral grandeur that eighteen subsequent centuries have done homage to him as the Almighty in person, was ignominiously put to death, as what? As a blasphemer. Men did not merely mistake their benefactor; they mistook him for the exact contrary of what he was, and treated him as that prodigy of impiety which they themselves are now held to be for their treatment of him. The feelings with which mankind now regard these lamentable transactions, especially the later of the

two, render them extremely unjust in their judgment of the unhappy actors. These were, to all appearance, not bad men—not worse than men commonly are, but rather the contrary; men who possessed in a full, or somewhat more than a full measure, the religious, moral, and patriotic feelings of their time and people: the very kind of men who, in all times, our own included, have every chance of passing through life blameless and respected. The high-priest who rent his garments when the words were pronounced, which, according to all the ideas of his country, constituted the blackest guilt, was in all probability quite as sincere in his horror and indignation as the generality of respectable and pious men now are in the religious and moral sentiments they profess; and most of those who now shudder at his conduct, if they had lived in his time, and been born Jews, would have acted precisely as he did. Orthodox Christians who are tempted to think that those who stoned to death the first martyrs must have been worse men than they themselves are, ought to remember that one of those persecutors was Saint Paul.

Let us add one more example, the most striking of all, if the impressiveness of an error is measured by the wisdom and virtue of him who falls into it. If ever any one, possessed of power, had grounds for thinking himself the best and most enlightened among his contemporaries, it was the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Absolute monarch of the whole civilised world, he preserved through life not only the most unblemished justice but what was less to

be expected from his Stoical breeding, the tenderest heart. The few failings which are attributed to him, were all on the side of indulgence: while his writings, the highest ethical product of the ancient mind, differ scarcely perceptibly, if they differ at all, from the most characteristic teachings of Christ. This man, a better Christian, in all but the dogmatic sense of the word, than almost any of the ostensibly Chirstian sovereigns who have since reigned, persecuted Christianity. Placed at the summit of all the previous attainments of humanity, with an open, unfettered intellect, and a character which led him of himself to embody in his moral writings the Christian ideal, he yet failed to see that Christianity was to be a good and not an evil to the world, with his duties to which he was so deeply penetrated. Existing society he knew to be in a deplorable state. But such as it was, he saw, or thought he saw, that it was held together, and prevented from being worse, by belief and reverence of the received divinities. As a ruler of mankind, he deemed it his duty not to suffer society to fall in pieces; and saw not how, if its existing ties were removed, any others could be formed which could again knit it together. The new religion openly aimed at dissolving these ties: unless, therefore, it was his duty to adopt that religion, it seemed to be his duty to put it down. Inasmuch then as the theology of Christianity did not appear to him true or of divine origin; inasmuch as this strange history of a crucified God was not credible to him, and a system which purported to rest entirely upon a founda-

tion to him so wholly unbelievable, could not be foreseen by him to be that renovating agency which, after all abatements, it has in fact proved to be; the gentlest and most amiable of philosophers and rulers, under a solemn sense of duty, authorised the persecution of Christianity. To my mind this is one of the most tragical facts in all history. It is a bitter thought, how different a thing the Christianity of the world might have been, if the Christian faith had been adopted as the religion of the empire under the auspices of Marcus Aurelius instead of those of Constantine. But it would be equally unjust to him and false to truth, to deny that no one plea which can be urged for punishing anti-Christian teaching, was wanting to Marcus Aurelius for punishing, as he did, the propagation of Christianity. No Christian more firmly believes that Atheism is false, and tends to the dissolution of society, than Marcus Aurelius believed the same things of Christianity: he who, of all men then living, might have been thought the most capable of appreciating it. Unless any one who approves of punishment for the promulgation of opinions, flatters himself that he is a wiser and better man than Marcus Aurelius—more deeply versed in the wisdom of his time, more elevated in his intellect above it—more earnest in his search for truth, or more single-minded in his devotion to it when found; let him abstain from that assumption of the joint infallibility of himself and the multitude, which the great Antoninus made with so unfortunate a result.

Aware of the impossibility of defending the use of punishment for restraining irreligious opinions by any argument which will not justify Marcus Antoninus, the enemies of religious freedom, when hard pressed, occasionally accept this consequence, and say, with Dr. Johnson, that the persecutors of Christianity were in the right; that persecution is an ordeal through which truth ought to pass, and always passes successfully, legal penalties being, in the end, powerless against truth, though sometimes beneficially effective against mischievous errors. This is a form of the argument for religious intolerance, sufficiently remarkable not to be passed without notice.

A theory which maintains that truth may justifiably be persecuted because persecution cannot possibly do it any harm, cannot be charged with being intentionally hostile to the reception of new truth; but we cannot commend the generosity of its dealing with the persons to whom mankind are indebted for them. To discover to the world something which deeply concerns it, and of which it was previously ignorant; to prove to it that it had been mistaken in some vital point of temporal or spiritual interest, is as important a service as a human being can render to his fellow-creatures, and in certain cases, as in those of the early Christians and of the Reformers, those who think with Dr. Johnson believe it to have been the most precious gift which could be bestowed on mankind. That the authors of such splendid benefits should be requited by martyrdom; that their reward should be to be dealt with as the vilest

of criminals, is not, upon this theory, a deplorable error and misfortune, for which humanity should mourn in sackcloth and ashes, but the normal and justifiable state of things. The propounder of a new truth, according to this doctrine, should stand, as stood, in the legislation of the Locrians, the proposer of a new law, with a halter round his neck, to be instantly tightened if the public assembly did not, on hearing his reasons, then and there adopt his proposition. People who defend this mode of treating benefactors, cannot be supposed to set much value on the benefit; and I believe this view of the subject is mostly confined to the sort of persons who think that new truths may have been desirable once, but that we have had enough of them now.

But, indeed, the dictum that truth always triumphs over persecution, is one of those pleasant falsehoods which men repeat after one another till they pass into commonplaces, but which all experience refutes. History teems with instances of truth put down by persecution. If not suppressed for ever, it may be thrown back for centuries. To speak only of religious opinions: the Reformation broke out at least twenty times before Luther, and was put down. Arnold of Brescia was put down. Fra Dolcino was put down. Savonarola was put down. The Albigeois were put down. The Vaudois were put down. The Lollards were put down. The Hussites were put down. Even after the era of Luther, wherever persecution was persisted in, it was successful. In Spain, Italy, Flanders, the Austrian Empire, Protestantism was rooted out; and,

most likely, would have been so in England, had Queen Mary lived, or Queen Elizabeth died. Persecution has always succeeded save where the heretics were too strong a party to be effectually persecuted. No reasonable person can doubt that Christianity might have been extirpated in the Roman Empire. It spread, and became predominant, because the persecutions were only occasional, lasting but a short time, and separated by long intervals of almost undisturbed propagandism. It is a piece of idle sentimentality that truth, merely as truth, has any inherent power denied to error, of prevailing against the dungeon and the stake. Men are not more zealous for truth than they often are for error, and a sufficient application of legal or even of social penalties will generally succeed in stopping the propagation of either. The real advantage which truth has, consists in this, that when an opinion is true, it may be extinguished once, twice, or many times, but in the course of ages there will generally be found persons to rediscover it, until some one of its reappearences falls on a time when from favourable circumstances it escapes persecution until it has made such head as to withstand all subsequent attempts to suppress it.

It will be said, that we do not now put to death the introducers of new opinions: we are not like our fathers who slew the prophets, we even build sepulchres to them. It is true we no longer put heretics to death; and the amount of penal infliction which modern feeling would probably tolerate, even against the most obnoxious opinions, is not sufficient to extirpate them. But let us not flatter ourselves that

we are yet free from the stain even of legal persecution. Penalties for opinion, or at least for its expression, still exist by law; and their enforcement is not, even in these times, so unexampled as to make it at all incredible that they may some day be revived in full force. In the year 1857, at the summer assizes of the county of Cornwall, an unfortunate man, said to be of unexceptionable conduct in all relations of life, was sentenced to twenty-one months' imprisonment, for uttering, and writing on a gate, some offensive words concerning Christianity. Within a month of the same time, at the Old Bailey, two persons, on two separate occasions, were rejected as jurymen, and one of them grossly insulted by the judge and by one of the counsel, because they honestly declared that they had no theological belief; and a third, a foreigner, for the same reason, was denied justice against a thief. This refusal of redress took place in virtue of the legal doctrine, that no person can be allowed to give evidence in a court of justice who does not profess belief in a God (any god is sufficient) and in a future state; which is equivalent to declaring such persons to be outlaws, excluded from the protection of the tribunals; who may not only be robbed or assaulted with impunity, if no one but themselves, or persons of similar opinions, be present, but any one else may be robbed or assaulted with impunity, if the proof of the fact depends on their evidence The assumption on which this is grounded is that the oath is worthless, of a person who does not believe in a future state; a proposition which betokens much ignorance of history in those who assent to it (since

it is historically true that a large proportion of infidels in all ages have been persons of distinguished integrity and honour); and would be maintained by no one who had the smallest conception how many of the persons in greatest repute with the world, both for virtues and attainments, are well known, at least to their intimates, to be unbelievers. The rule, besides, is suicidal, and cuts away its own foundation. Under pretence that atheists must be liars. it admits the testimony of all atheists who are willing to lie and rejects only those who brave the obloquy of publicly confessing a detested creed rather than affirm a falsehood. A rule thus self-convicted of absurdity, so far as regards its professed purpose, can be kept in force only as a badge of hatred, a relic of persecution; a persecution, too, having the peculiarity that the qualification for undergoing it is the being clearly proved not to deserve it. The rule, and the theory it implies, are hardly less insulting to believers than to infidels. For if he who does not believe in a future state necessarily lies, it follows that they who do believe are only prevented from lying, if prevented they are, by the fear of hell. We will not do the authors and abettors of the rule the injury of supposing that the conception which they have formed of Christian virtue is drawn from their own consciousness.

These, indeed, are but rags and remnants of persecution, and may be thought to be not so much an indication of the wish to persecute, as an example of that very frequent infirmity of English minds, which makes them take a preposterous pleasure in

the assertion of a bad principle, when they are no longer bad enough to desire to carry it really into practice. But unhappily there is no security in the state of the public mind that the suspension of worse forms of legal persecution, which has lasted for about the space of a generation, will continue. In this age the quiet surface of routine is as often ruffled by attempts to resuscitate past evils, as to introduce new benefits. What is boasted of at the present time as the revival of religion, is always, in narrow and uncultivated minds, at least as much the revival of bigotry; and where there is the strong permanent leaven of intolerance in the feelings of a people, which at all times abides in the middle classes of this country, it needs but little to provoke them into actively persecuting those whom they have never ceased to think proper objects of persecution. For it is this—it is the opinions men entertain, and the feelings they cherish, respecting those who disown the beliefs they deem important, which makes the country not a place of mental freedom. For a long time past. the chief mischief of the legal penalties is that they strengthen the social stigma. It is that stigma which is really effective, and so effective is it, that the profession of opinions which are under the ban of society is much less common in England than is, in many other countries, the avowal of those which incur risk of judicial punishment. In respect to all persons but those whose pecuniary circumstances make them independent of the good will of other people, opinion, on this subject, is as efficacious as law; men might as well be imprisoned, as excluded from the means

of earning their bread. Those whose bread is already secured, and who desire no favours from men in power, or from bodies of men, or from the public, have nothing to fear from the open avowal of any opinions, but to be ill-thought of and ill-spoken of, and this it ought not to require a very heroic mould to enable them to bear. There is no room for any appeal *ad misericordiam* in behalf of such persons. But though we do not now inflict so much evil on those who think differently from us, as it was formerly our custom to do, it may be that we do ourselves as much evil as ever by our treatment of them. Socrates was put to death, but the Socratic philosophy rose like the sun in heaven, and spread its illumination over the whole intellectual firmament. Christians were cast to the lions, but the Christian church grew up a stately and spreading tree, overtopping the older and less vigorous growths, and stifling them by its shade. Our merely social intolerance kills no one, roots out no opinions, but induces men to disguise them, or to abstain from any active effort for their diffusion. With us, heretical opinions do not perceptibly gain, or even lose, ground in each decade or generation; they never blaze out far and wide, but continue to smoulder in the narrow circles of thinking and studious persons among whom they originate, without ever lighting up the general affairs of mankind with either a true or a deceptive light. And thus is kept up a state of things very satisfactory to some minds, because, without the unpleasant process of fining or imprisoning anybody, it maintains all prevailing opinions outwardly undisturbed, while it does

not absolutely interdict the exercise of reason by dissentients afflicted with the malady of thought. A convenient plan for having peace in the intellectual world, and keeping all things going on therein very much as they do already. But the price paid for this sort of intellectual pacification is the sacrifice of the entire moral courage of the human mind. A state of things in which a large portion of the most active and inquiring intellects find it advisable to keep the general principles and grounds of their convictions within their own breasts, and attempt, in what they address to the public, to fit as much as they can of their own conclusions to premises which they have internally renounced, cannot send forth the open, fearless characters, and logical, consistent intellects who once adorned the thinking world. The sort of men who can be looked for under it, are either mere conformers to common-place, or time-servers for truth, whose arguments on all great subjects are meant for their hearers, and are not those which have convinced themselves. Those who avoid this alternative, do so by narrowing their thoughts and interest to things which can be spoken of without venturing within the region of principles, that is, to small practical matters, which would come right of themselves, if but the minds of mankind were strengthened and enlarged, and which will never be made effectually right until then: while that which would strengthen and enlarge men's minds, free and daring speculation on the highest subjects, is abandoned.

Those in whose eyes this reticence on the part of heretics is no evil should consider, in the first place,

that in consequence of it there is never any fair and thorough discussion of heretical opinions; and that such of them as could not stand such a discussion, though they may be prevented from spreading, do not disappear. But it is not the minds of heretics that are deteriorated most by the ban placed on all inquiry which does not end in the orthodox conclusions. The greatest harm done is to those who are not heretics, and whose whole mental development is cramped, and their reason cowed, by the fear of heresy. Who can compute what the world loses in the multitude of promising intellects combined with timid characters, who dare not follow out any bold, vigorous, independent train of thought, lest it should land them in something which would admit of being considered irreligious or immoral? Among them we may occasionally see some man of deep conscientiousness, and subtle and refined understanding, who spends a life in sophisticating with an intellect which he cannot silence, and exhaust the resources of ingenuity in attempting to reconcile the promptings of his conscience and reason with orthodoxy, which yet he does not, perhaps, to the end succeed in doing. No one can be a great thinker who does not recognise, that as a thinker it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead. Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think. Not that it is solely, or chiefly, to form great thinkers, that freedom of thinking is required. On the contrary

it is as much and even more indispensable to enable average human beings to attain the mental stature which they are capable of. There have been, and may again be, great individual thinkers in a general atmosphere of mental slavery. But there never has been, nor ever will be, in that atmosphere an intellectually active people. Where any people has made a temporary approach to such a character, it has been because the dread of heterodox speculation was for a time suspended. Where there is a tacit convention that principles are not to be disputed; where the discussion of the greatest questions which can occupy humanity is considered to be closed, we cannot hope to find that generally high scale of mental activity which has made some periods of history so remarkable. Never when controversy avoided the subjects which are large and important enough to kindle enthusiasm, was the mind of a people stirred up from its foundations, and the impulse given which raised even persons of the most ordinary intellect to something of the dignity of thinking beings. Of such we have had an example in the condition of Europe during the times immediately following the Reformation; another, though limited to the Continent and to a more cultivated class, in the speculative movement of the latter half of the eighteenth century; and a third, of still briefer duration, in the intellectual fermentation of Germany during the Goethian and Fichtean period. These periods differed widely in the particular opinions which they developed; but were alike in this, that during all three the yoke of authority was broken. In each, an old mental despotism had

been thrown off, and no new one had yet taken its place. The impulse given at these three periods has made Europe what it now is. Every single improvement which has taken place either in the human mind or in institutions, may be traced distinctly to one or other of them. Appearances have for some time indicated that all three impulses are well nigh spent; and we can expect no fresh start, until we again assert our mental freedom.

Let us now pass to the second division of the argument, and dismissing the supposition that any of the received opinions may be false, let us assume them to be true, and examine into the worth of the manner in which they are likely to be held, when their truth is not freely and openly canvassed. However unwillingly a person who has a strong opinion may admit the possibility that his opinion may be false, he ought to be moved by the consideration that however true it may be, if it is not fully, frequently, and fearlessly discussed, it will be held as a dead dogma, not a living truth.

There is a class of persons (happily not quite so numerous as formerly) who think it enough if a person assents undoubtingly to what they think true, though he has no knowledge whatever of the grounds of the opinion. and could not make a tenable defence of it against the most superficial objections. Such persons, if they can once get their creed taught from authority, naturally think that no good, and some harm, comes of its being allowed to be questioned. Where their influence prevails, they make it nearly impossible for the received opinion to be rejected wisely and con-

siderately, though it may still be rejected rashly and ignorantly; for to shut out discussion entirely is seldom possible, and when it once gets in, beliefs not grounded on conviction are apt to give way before the slightest semblance of an argument. Waiving, however, this possibility—assuming that the true opinion abides in the mind, but abides as a prejudice, a belief independent of, and proof against, argument—this is not the way in which truth ought to be held by a rational being. This is not knowing the truth. Truth, thus held, is but one superstition the more, accidentally clinging to the words which enunciate a truth.

If the intellect and judgment of mankind ought to be cultivated, a thing which Protestants at least do not deny, on what can these faculties be more appropriately exercised by any one, than on the things which concern him so much that it is considered necessary for him to hold opinions on them? If the cultivation of the understanding consists in one thing more than in another, it is surely in learning the grounds of one's own opinions. Whatever people believe, on subjects on which it is of the first importance to believe rightly, they ought to be able to defend against at least the common objections. But, some one may say, " Let them be *taught* the grounds of their opinions. It does not follow that opinions must be merely parroted because they are never heard controverted. Persons who learn geometry do not simply commit the theorems to memory, but understand and learn likewise the demonstrations; and it would be absurd to say that they remain ignorant of the grounds of geometrical truths, because they never

hear any one deny, and attempt to disprove them." Undoubtedly: and such teaching suffices on a subject like mathematics, where there is nothing at all to be said on the wrong side of the question. The peculiarity of the evidence of mathematical truths is that all the argument is on one side. There are no objections and no answers to objections. But on every subject on which difference of opinion is possible, the truth depends on a balance to be struck between two sets of conflicting reasons. Even in natural philosophy, there is always some other explanation possible of the same facts; some geocentric theory instead of heliocentric, some phlogiston instead of oxygen; and it has to be shown why that other theory cannot be the true one: and until this is shown, and until we know how it is shown, we do not understand the grounds of our opinion. But when we turn to subjects infinitely more complicated, to morals, religion, politics, social relations, and the business of life, three-fourths of the arguments for every disputed opinion consists in dispelling the appearances which favour some opinion different from it. The greatest orator, save one, of antiquity, has left it on record that he always studied his adversary's case with as great, if not still greater, intensity than even his own. What Cicero practised as the means of forensic success, requires to be imitated by all who study any subject in order to arrive at the truth. He, who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side; if

he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion. The rational position for him would be suspension of judgment, and unless he contents himself with that, he is either led by authority, or adopts, like the generality of the world, the side to which he feels most inclination. Nor is it enough that he should hear the arguments of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as refutations. That is not the way to do justice to the arguments, or bring them into real contact with his own mind. He must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them; who defend them in earnest, and do their very utmost for them. He must know them in their most plausible and persuasive form; he must feel the whole force of the difficulty which the true view of the subject has to encounter and dispose of; else he will never really possess himself of the portion of truth which meets and removes that difficulty. Ninety-nine in a hundred of what are called educated men are in this condition; even of those who can argue fluently for their opinions. Their conclusion may be true, but it might be false for anything they know: they have never thrown themselves into the mental position of those who think differently from them, and considered what such persons may have to say; and consequently they do not, in any proper sense of the word, know the doctrine which they themselves profess. They do not know those parts of it which explain and justify the remainder; the considerations which show that a fact which seemingly conflicts with

another is reconcilable with it, or that, of two apparently strong reasons, one and not the other ought to be preferred. All that part of the truth which turns the scale, and decides the judgment of a completely informed mind, they are strangers to; nor is it ever really known, but to those who have attended equally and impartially to both sides, and endeavoured to see the reasons of both in the strongest light. So essential is this discipline to a real understanding of moral and human subjects, that if opponents of all important truths do not exist, it is indispensable to imagine them, and supply them with the strongest arguments which the most skilful devil's advocate can conjure up.

To abate the force of these considerations, an enemy of free discussion may be supposed to say, that there is no necessity for mankind in general to know and understand all that can be said against or for their opinions by philosophers and theologians. That it is not needful for common men to be able to expose all the misstatements or fallacies of an ingenious opponent. That it is enough if there is always somebody capable of answering them, so that nothing likely to mislead uninstructed persons remains unrefuted. That simple minds, having been taught the obvious grounds of the truths inculcated on them, may trust to authority for the rest, and being aware that they have neither knowledge nor talent to resolve every difficulty which can be raised, may repose in the assurance that all those which have been raised have been or can be answered by those who are specially trained to the task.

Conceding to this view of the subject the utmost that can be claimed for it by those most easily satisfied with the amount of understanding of truth which ought to accompany the belief of it; even so, the argument for free discussion is no way weakened. For even this doctrine acknowledges that mankind ought to have a rational assurance that all objections have been satisfactorily answered; and how are they to be answered if that which requires to be answered is not spoken? or how can the answer be known to be satisfactory, if the objectors have no opportunity of showing that it is unsatisfactory? If not the public, at least the philosophers and theologians who are to resolve the difficulties, must make themselves familiar with those difficulties in their most puzzling form; and this cannot be accomplished unless they are freely stated, and placed in the most advantageous light which they admit of. The Catholic Church has its own way of dealing with this embarrassing problem. It makes a broad separation between those who can be permitted to receive its doctrines on conviction, and those who must accept them on trust. Neither, indeed, are allowed any choice as to what they will accept; but the clergy, such at least as can be fully confided in, may admissibly and meritoriously make themselves acquainted with the arguments of opponents, in order to answer them, and may, therefore, read heretical books; the laity, not unless by special permission, hard to be obtained. This discipline recognises a knowledge of the enemy's case as beneficial to the teachers, but finds means, consistent with this, of denying it to

the rest of the world: thus giving to the *élite* more mental culture, though not more mental freedom, than it allows to the mass. By this device it succeeds in obtaining the kind of mental superiority which its purposes require; for though culture without freedom never made a large and liberal mind, it can make a clever *nisi prius* advocate of a cause. But in countries professing Protestantism, this resource is denied; since Protestants hold, at least in theory, that the responsibility for the choice of a religion must be borne by each for himself, and cannot be thrown off upon teachers. Besides, in the present state of the world, it is practically impossible that writings which are read by the instructed can be kept from the uninstructed. If the teachers of mankind are to be cognisant of all that they ought to know, everything must be free to be written and published without restraint.

If, however, the mischievous operation of the absence of free discussion, when the received opinions are true, were confined to leaving men ignorant of the grounds of those opinions, it might be thought that this, if an intellectual, is no moral evil, and does not affect the worth of the opinions, regarded in their influence on the character. The fact, however, is, that not only the grounds of the opinion are forgotten in the absence of discussion, but too often the meaning of the opinion itself. The words which convey it, cease to suggest ideas, or suggest only a small portion of those they were originally employed to communicate. Instead of a vivid con-

ception and a living belief there remain only a few phrases retained by rote; or, if any part, the shell and husk only of the meaning is retained, the finer essence being lost. The great chapter in human history, which this fact occupies and fills, cannot be too earnestly studied and meditated on.

It is illustrated in the experience of almost all ethical doctrines and religious creeds. They are all full of meaning and vitality to those who originate them, and to the direct disciples of the originators. Their meaning continues to be felt in undiminished strength, and is perhaps brought out into even fuller consciousness, so long as the struggle lasts to give the doctrine or creed an ascendancy over other creeds. At last it either prevails, and becomes the general opinion, or its progress stops; it keeps possession of the ground it has gained, but ceases to spread further. When either of these results has become apparent, controversy on the subject flags, and gradually dies away. The doctrine has taken its place, if not as a received opinion, as one of the admitted sects or divisions of opinion: those who hold it have generally inherited, not adopted it; and conversion from one of these doctrines to another, being now an exceptional fact, occupies little place in the thoughts of their professors. Instead of being, as at first, constantly on the alert either to defend themselves against the world, or to bring the world over to them, they have subsided into acquiescence, and neither listen, when they can help it, to arguments against their creed, nor trouble dissentients (if there be such) with arguments in

its favour. From this time may usually be dated the decline in the living power of the doctrine. We often hear the teachers of all creeds lamenting the difficulty of keeping up in the minds of believers a lively apprehension of the truth which they nominally recognise, so that it may penetrate the feelings, and acquire a real mastery over the conduct. No such difficulty is complained of while the creed is still fighting for its existence: even the weaker combatants then know and feel what they are fighting for, and the difference between it and other doctrines; and in that period of every creed's existence, not a few persons may be found, who have realised its fundamental principles in all the forms of thought, have weighed and considered them in all their important bearings, and have experienced the full effect on the character, which belief in that creed ought to produce in a mind thoroughly imbued with it. But when it has come to be an hereditary creed, and to be received passively, not actively—when the mind is no longer compelled, in the same degree as at first, to exercise its vital powers on the questions which its belief presents to it, there is a progressive tendency to forget all of the belief except the formularies, or to give it a dull and torpid assent, as if accepting it on trust dispensed with the necessity of realising it in consciousness, or testing it by personal experience, until it almost ceases to connect itself at all with the inner life of the human being. Then are seen the cases, so frequent in this age of the world as almost to form the majority, in which the creed remains as it were outside the mind, incrusting

and petrifying it against all other influences addressed to the higher parts of our nature; manifesting its power by not suffering any fresh and living conviction to get in, but itself doing nothing for the mind or heart, except standing sentinel over them to keep them vacant.

To what an extent doctrines intrinsically fitted to make the deepest impression upon the mind may remain in it as dead beliefs, without being ever realised in the imagination, the feelings, or the understanding, is exemplified by the manner in which the majority of believers hold the doctrines of Christianity. By Christianity I here mean what is accounted such by all churches and sects—the maxims and precepts contained in the New Testament. These are considered sacred, and accepted as laws, by all professing Christians. Yet it is scarcely too much to say that not one Christian in a thousand guides or tests his individual conduct by reference to those laws. The standard to which he does refer it, is the custom of his nation, his class, or his religious profession. He has thus, on the one hand, a collection of ethical maxims, which he believes to have been vouchsafed to him by infallible wisdom as rules for his government; and on the other a set of every-day judgments and practices, which go a certain length with some of those maxims, not so great a length with others, stand in direct opposition to some, and are, on the whole, a compromise between the Christian creed and the interests and suggestions of worldly life. To the first of these standards he gives his homage; to the other his

real allegiance. All Christians believe that the blessed are the poor and humble, and those who are ill-used by the world; that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven; that they should judge not, lest they be judged; that they should swear not at all; that they should love their neighbour as themselves; that if one take their cloak, they should give him their coat also; that they should take no thought for the morrow; that if they would be perfect, they should sell all that they have and give it to the poor. They are not insincere when they say that they believe these things. They do believe them, as people believe what they have always heard lauded and never discussed. But in the sense of that living belief which regulates conduct, they believe these doctrines just up to the point to which it is usual to act upon them. The doctrines in their integrity are serviceable to pelt adversaries with; and it is understood that they are to be put forward (when possible) as the reasons for whatever people do that they think laudable. But anyone who reminded them that the maxims require an infinity of things which they never even think of doing, would gain nothing but to be classed among those very unpopular characters who affect to be better than other people. The doctrines have no hold on ordinary believers—are not a power in their minds. They have an habitual respect for the sound of them, but no feeling which spreads from the words to the things signified, and forces the mind to take *them* in, and make them conform to the formula. Whenever

conduct is concerned, they look round for Mr. A and Mr. B to direct them how far to go in obeying Christ.

Now we may be well assured that the case was not thus, but far otherwise, with the early Christians. Had it been thus, Christianity never would have expanded from an obscure sect of the despised Hebrews into the religion of the Roman Empire. When their enemies said, "See how these Christians love one another" (a remark not likely to be made by anybody now), they assuredly had a much livelier feeling of the meaning of their creed than they have ever had since. And to this cause, probably, it is chiefly owing that Christianity now makes so little progress in extending its domain, and after eighteen centuries, is still nearly confined to Europeans and the descendants of Europeans. Even with the strictly religious, who are much in earnest about their doctrines, and attach a greater amount of meaning to many of them than people in general, it commonly happens that the part which is thus comparatively active in their minds is that which was made by Calvin, or Knox, or some such person much nearer in character to themselves. The sayings of Christ co-exist passively in their minds, producing hardly any effect beyond what is caused by mere listening to words so amiable and bland. There are many reasons, doubtless, why doctrines which are the badge of a sect retain more of their vitality than those common to all recognised sects, and why more pains are taken by teachers to keep their meaning alive; but one reason certainly is, that the peculiar doctrines are

more questioned, and have to be oftener defended against open gainsayers. Both teachers and learners go to sleep at their post, as soon as there is no enemy in the field.

The same thing holds true, generally speaking, of all traditional doctrines—those of prudence and knowledge of life, as well as of morals or religion. All languages and literatures are full of general observations on life, both as to what it is, and how to conduct oneself in it; observations which everybody knows, which everybody repeats, or hears with acquiescence, which are received as truisms, yet of which most people first truly learn the meaning when experience, generally of a painful kind, has made it a reality to them. How often, when smarting under some unforeseen misfortune or disappointment, does a person call to mind some proverb or common saying, familiar to him all his life, the meaning of which, if he had ever before felt it as he does now, would have saved him from the calamity. There are indeed reasons for this, other than the absence of discussion; there are many truths of which the full meaning *cannot* be realised until personal experience has brought it home. But much more of the meaning even of these would have been understood, and what was understood would have been far more deeply impressed on the mind, if the man had been accustomed to hear it argued *pro* and *con* by people who did understand it. The fatal tendency of mankind to leave off thinking about a thing when it is no longer doubtful, is the cause of half their errors. A contemporary author has well

spoken of "the deep slumber of a decided opinion."

But what! (it may be asked) Is the absence of unanimity an indispensable condition of true knowledge? Is it necessary that some part of mankind should persist in error, to enable any to realise the truth? Does a belief cease to be real and vital as soon as it is generally received—and is a proposition never thoroughly understood and felt unless some doubt of it remains? As soon as mankind have unanimuosly accepted a truth, does the truth perish within them? The highest aim and best result of improved intelligence, it has hitherto been thought, is to unite mankind more and more in the acknowledgment of all important truth; and does the intelligence only last as long as it has not achieved its object? Do the fruits of conquest perish by the very completeness of the victory?

I affirm no such thing. As mankind improve, the number of doctrines which are no longer disputed or doubted will be constantly on the increase: and the well-being of mankind may almost be measured by the number and gravity of the truths which have reached the point of being uncontested. The cessation, on one question after another, of serious controversy, is one of the necessary incidents of the consolidation of opinion; a consolidation as salutary in the case of true opinions, as it is dangerous and noxious when the opinions are erroneous. But though this gradual narrowing of the bounds of diversity of opinion is necessary in both senses of the term, being at once inevitable and indispensable.

we are not therefore obliged to conclude that all its consequences must be beneficial. The loss of so important an aid to the intelligent and living apprehension of a truth, as is afforded by the necessity of explaining it to, or defending it against, opponents, though not sufficient to outweigh, is no trifling drawback from, the benefit of its universal recognition. Where this advantage can no longer be had, I confess I should like to see the teachers of mankind endeavouring to provide a substitute for it; some contrivance for making the difficulties of the question as present to the learner's consciousness, as if they were pressed upon him by a dissentient champion, eager for his conversion.

But instead of seeking contrivances for this purpose, they have lost those they formerly had. The Socratic dialectics, so magnificently exemplified in the dialogues of Plato, were a contrivance of this description. They were essentially a negative discussion of the great question of philosophy and life, directed with consummate skill to the purpose of convincing any one who had merely adopted the commonplaces of received opinion, that he did not understand the subject—that he as yet attached no definite meaning to the doctrines he professed; in order that, becoming aware of his ignorance, he might be put in the way to obtain a stable belief, resting on a clear apprehension both of the meaning of doctrines and of their evidence. The school disputations of the Middle Ages had a somewhat similar object. They were intended to make sure that the pupil understood his

own opinion, and (by necessary correlation) the opinion opposed to it, and could enforce the grounds of the one and confute those of the other. These last-mentioned contests had indeed the incurable defect, that the premises appealed to were taken from authority, not from reason; and, as a discipline to the mind, they were in every respect inferior to the powerful dialectics which formed the intellects of the "Socratici viri"; but the modern mind owes far more to both than it is generally willing to admit, and the present modes of education contain nothing which in the smallest degree supplies the place either of the one or of the other. A person who derives all his instruction from teachers or books, even if he escape the besetting temptation of contenting himself with cram, is under no compulsion to hear both sides; accordingly it is far from a frequent accomplishment, even among thinkers, to know both sides; and the weakest part of what everybody says in defence of his opinion, is what he intends as a reply to antagonists. It is the fashion of the present time to disparage negative logic—that which points out weaknesses in theory or errors in practice, without establishing positive truths. Such negative criticism would indeed be poor enough as an ultimate result; but as a means to attaining any positive knowledge or conviction worthy the name, it cannot be valued too highly; and until people are again systematically trained to it, there will be few great thinkers, and a low general average of intellect, in any but the mathematical and physical departments of specu-

lation. On any other subject no one's opinions deserve the name of knowledge, except so far as he has either had forced upon him by others, or gone through of himself, the same mental process which would have been required of him in carrying on an active controversy with opponents. That, therefore, which when absent, it is so indispensable, but so difficult, to create, how worse than absurd it is to forego, when spontaneously offering itself! If there are any persons who contest a received opinion, or who will do so if law or opinion will let them, let us thank them for it, open our minds to listen to them, and rejoice that there is someone to do for us what we otherwise ought, if we have any regard for either the certainty or the vitality of our convictions, to do with much greater labour for ourselves.

It still remains to speak of one of the principal causes which make diversity of opinion advantageous, and will continue to do so until mankind shall have entered a stage of intellectual advancement which at present seems at an incalculable distance. We have hitherto considered only two possibilties: that the received opinion may be false, and some other opinion, consequently, true; or that, the received opinion being true, a conflict with the opposite error is essential to a clear apprehension and deep feeling of its truth. But there is a commoner case than either of these; when the conflicting doctrines, instead of being one true and the other false, share the truth between them; and the nonconforming opinion is needed

to supply the remainder of the truth, of which the received doctrine embodies only a part. Popular opinions, on subjects not palpable to sense, are often true, but seldom or never the whole truth. They are a part of the truth; sometimes a greater, sometimes a smaller part, but exaggerated, distorted, and disjoined from the truths by which they ought to be accompanied and limited. Heretical opinions, on the other hand, are generally some of these suppressed and neglected truths, bursting the bonds which kept them down, and either seeking reconciliation with the truth contained in the common opinion, or fronting it as enemies, and setting themselves up, with similar exclusiveness, as the whole truth. The latter case is hitherto the most frequent, as, in the human mind, one-sidedness has always been the rule, and many-sidedness the exception. Hence, even in revolutions of opinion, one part of the truth usually sets while another rises. Even progress, which ought to superadd, for the most part only substitutes, one partial and incomplete truth for another; improvement consisting chiefly in this, that the new fragment of truth is more wanted, more adapted to the needs of the time, than that which it displaces. Such being the partial character of prevailing opinions, even when resting on a true foundation, every opinion which embodies somewhat of the portion of truth which the common opinion omits, ought to be considered precious, with whatever amount of error and confusion that truth may be blended. No sober judge of human affairs will feel bound to be indignant because those who force

on our notice truths which we should otherwise have overlooked, overlook some of those which we see. Rather, he will think that so long as popular truth is one-sided, it is more desirable than otherwise that unpopular truth should have one-sided assertors too; such being usually the most energetic, and the most likely to compel reluctant attention to the fragment of wisdom which they proclaim as if it were the whole.

Thus, in the eighteenth century, when nearly all the instructed, and all those of the uninstructed who were led by them, were lost in admiration of what is called civilisation, and of the marvels of modern science, literature, and philosophy, and while greatly overrating the amount of unlikeness between the men of modern and those of ancient times, indulged the belief that the whole of the difference was in their own favour; with what a salutary shock did the paradoxes of Rousseau explode like bombshells in the midst, dislocating the compact mass of one-sided opinion, and forcing its elements to recombine in a better form and with additional ingredients. Not that the current opinions were on the whole farther from the truth than Rousseau's were; on the contrary, they were nearer to it; they contained more of positive truth, and very much less of error. Nevertheless there lay in Rousseau's doctrine, and has floated down the stream of opinion along with it, a considerable amount of exactly those truths which the popular opinion wanted; and these are the deposit which was left behind when the flood subsided. The superior worth of simplicity of life, the enervating and demoralising effect of the trammels and hypo-

crisies of artificial society, are ideas which have never been entirely absent from cultivated minds since Rousseau wrote; and they will in time produce their due effect, though at present needing to be asserted as much as ever, and to be asserted by deeds, for words, on this subject, have nearly exhausted their power.

In politics, again, it is almost a commonplace, that a party of order or stability, and a party of progress or reform, are both necessary elements of a healthy state of political life; until the one or the other shall have so enlarged its mental grasp as to be a party equally of order and of progress, knowing and distinguishing what is fit to be preserved from what ought to be swept away. Each of these modes of thinking derives its utility from the deficiencies of the other; but it is in a great measure the opposition of the other that keeps each within the limits of reason and sanity. Unless opinions favourable to democracy and to aristocracy, to property and to equality, to co-operation and to competition, to luxury and to abstinence, to sociality and individuality, to liberty and discipline, and all the other standing antagonisms of practical life, are expressed with equal freedom, and enforced and defended with equal talent and energy, there is no chance of both elements obtaining their due; one scale is sure to go up, and the other down. Truth, in the great practical concerns of life, is so much a question of the reconciling and combining of opposites, that very few have minds sufficiently capacious and impartial to make the adjustment with an approach to correctness, and

it has to be made by the rough process of a struggle between combatants fighting under hostile banners. On any of the great open questions just enumerated, if either of the two opinions has a better claim than the other, not merely to be tolerated, but to be encouraged and countenanced, it is the one which happens at the particular time and place to be in a minority. That is the opinion which, for the time being, represents the neglected interests, the side of human well-being which is in danger of obtaining less than its share. I am aware that there is not, in this country, any intolerance of differences of opinion on most of these topics. They are adduced to show, by admitted and multiplied examples, the universality of the fact, that only through diversity of opinion is there, in the existing state of human intellect, a chance of fair play to all sides of the truth. When there are persons to be found, who form an exception to the apparent unanimity of the world on any subject, even if the world is in the right, it is always probable that dissentients have something worth hearing to say for themselves, and that truth would lose something by their silence.

It may be objected, "But *some* received principles, especially on the highest and most vital subjects, are more than half-truths. The Christian morality, for instance, is the whole truth on that subject, and if any one teaches a morality which varies from it, he is wholly in error." As this is of all cases the most important in practice, none can be fitter to test the general maxim. But before pronouncing what Christian morality is or is not, it would be

desirable to decide what is meant by Christian morality. If it means the morality of the New Testament, I wonder that any one who derives his knowledge of this from the book itself, can suppose that it was announced, or intended, as a complete doctrine of morals. The Gospel always refers to a pre-existing morality, and confines its precepts to the particulars in which that morality was to be corrected, or superseded by a wider and higher; expressing itself, moreover, in terms most general, often impossible to be interpreted literally, and possessing rather the impressiveness of poetry or eloquence than the precision of legislation. To extract from it a body of ethical doctrine, has never been possible without eking it out from the Old Testament, that is, from a system elaborate indeed, but in many respects barbarous, and intended only for a barbarous people. St. Paul, a declared enemy to this Judaical mode of interpreting the doctrine and filling up the scheme of his Master, equally assumes a pre-existing morality, namely that of the Greeks and Romans; and his advice to Christians is in a great measure a system of accommodation to that; even to the extent of giving an apparent sanction to slavery. What is called Christian, but should rather be termed theological, morality, was not the work of Christ or the Apostles, but is of much later origin, having been gradually built up by the Catholic church of the first five centuries, and though not implicitly adopted by moderns and Protestants, has been much less modified by them than might have been expected. For the most part, indeed, they have contented them-

selves with cutting off the additions which had been made to it in the Middle Ages, each sect supplying the place by fresh additions, adapted to its own character and tendencies. That mankind owe a great debt to this morality, and to its early teachers, I should be the last person to deny; but I do not scruple to say of it that it is, in many important points, incomplete and one-sided, and that unless ideas and feelings, not sanctioned by it, had cotributed to the formation of European life and character, human affairs would have been in a worse condition than they now are. Christian morality (so called) has all the characters of a reaction; it is, in great part, a protest against Paganism. Its ideal is negative rather than positive; passive rather than active; Innocence rather than Nobleness; Abstinence from Evil, rather than energetic Pursuit of Good; in its precepts (as has been well said) "thou shalt not" predominates unduly over "thou shalt." In its horror of sensuality, it made an idol of asceticism, which has been gradually compromised away into one of legality. It holds out the hope of heaven and the threat of hell, as the appointed and appropriate motives to a virtuous life: in this falling far below the best of the ancients, and doing what lies in it to give to human morality an essentially selfish character, by disconnecting each man's feelings of duty from the interests of his fellow-creatures, except so far as a self-interested inducement is offered to him for consulting them. It is essentially a doctrine of passive obedience; it inculcates submission to all authorities found established; who indeed are not to be actively obeyed when they

command what religion forbids, but who are not to be resisted, far less rebelled against, for any amount of wrong to ourselves. And while, in the morality of the best Pagan nations, duty to the State holds even a disproportionate place, infringing on the just liberty of the individual, in purely Christian ethics, that grand department of duty is scarcely noticed or acknowledged. It is in the Koran, not the New Testament, that we read the maxim—" A ruler who appoints any man to an office, when there is in his dominions another man better qualified for it, sins against God and against the State." What little recognition the idea of obligation to the public obtains in modern morality, is derived from Greek and Roman sources, not from Christian; as, even in the morality of private life, whatever exists of magnanimity, high-mindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honour, is derived from the purely human, not the religious part of our education, and never could have grown out of a standard of ethics in which the only worth, professedly recognised, is that of obedience.

I am as far as any one from pretending that these defects are necessarily inherent in the Christian ethics, in every manner in which it can be conceived, or that the many requisites of a complete moral doctrine which it does not contain do not admit of being reconciled with it. Far less would I insinuate this of the doctrines and precepts of Christ himself. I believe that the sayings of Christ are all that I can see any evidence of their having been intended to be; that they are irreconcilable with nothing which a

comprehensive morality requires; that everything which is excellent in ethics may be brought within them, with no greater violence to their language than has been done to it by all who have attempted to deduce from them any practical system of conduct whatever. But it is quite consistent with this, to believe that they contain, and were meant to contain, only a part of the truth; that many essential elements of the highest morality are among the things which are not provided for, nor intended to be provided for, in the recorded deliverances of the Founder of Christianity, and which have been entirely thrown aside in the system of ethics erected on the basis of those deliverances by the Christian Church. And this being so, I think it a great error to persist in attempting to find in the Christian doctrine that complete rule for our guidance which its author intended it to sanction and enforce, but only partially to provide. I believe, too, that this narrow theory is becoming a grave practical evil, detracting greatly from the moral training and instruction which so many well-meaning persons are now at length exerting themselves to promote. I much fear that by attempting to form the mind and feelings on an exclusively religious type, and discarding those secular standards (as for want of a better name they may be called) which heretofore co-existed with and supplemented the Christian ethics, receiving some of its spirit, and infusing into it some of theirs, there will result, and is even now resulting, a low, abject, servile type of character, which, submit itself as it may to what it deems the Supreme Will, is incapable of rising to

or sympathising in the conception of Supreme Goodness. I believe that other ethics than any which can be evolved from exclusively Christian sources, must exist side by side with Christian ethics, to produce the moral regeneration of mankind; and that the Christian system is no exception to the rule, that in an imperfect state of the human mind, the interests of truth require a diversity of opinions. It is not necessary that in ceasing to ignore the moral truths not contained in Christianity, men should ignore any of those which it does contain. Such prejudice, or oversight, when it occurs, is altogether an evil; but it is one from which we cannot hope to be always exempt, and must be regarded as the price paid for an inestimable good. The exclusive pretension made by a part of the truth to be the whole, must and ought to be protested against; and if a reactionary impulse should make the protestors unjust in their turn, this one-sideness, like the other, may be lamented, but must be tolerated. If Christians would teach infidels to be just to Christianity, they should themselves be just to infidelity. It can do truth no service to blink the fact, known to all who have the most ordinary acquaintance with literary history, that a large portion of the noblest and most valuable moral teaching has been the work, not only of men who did not know, but of men who knew and rejected, the Christian faith.

I do not pretend that the most unlimited use of the freedom of enunciating all possible opinions would put an end to the evils of religious or philosophical sectarianism. Every truth which men of narrow

capacity are in earnest about, is sure to be asserted, inculcated, and in many ways even acted on, as if no other truth existed in the world, or at all events none that could limit or qualify the first. I acknowledge that the tendency of all opinions to become sectarian is not cured by the freest discussion, but is often heightened and exacerbated thereby; the truth which ought to have been, but was not, seen, being rejected all the more violently because proclaimed by persons regarded as opponents. But it is not on the impassioned partisan, it is on the calmer and more disinterested bystander, that this collision of opinions works its salutary effect. Not the violent conflict between parts of the truth, but the quiet suppression of half of it, is the formidable evil; there is always hope when people are forced to listen to both sides; it is when they attend only to one that errors harden into prejudices, and truth itself ceases to have the effect of truth, by being exaggerated into falsehood. And since there are few mental attributes more rare than that judicial faculty which can sit in intelligent judgment between two sides of a question, of which only one is represented by an advocate before it, truth has no chance but in proportion as every side of it, every opinion which embodies any fraction of the truth, not only finds advocates, but is so advocated as to be listened to.

We have now recognised the necessity to the mental well-being of mankind (on which all their other well-being depends) of freedom of opinion, and freedom of the expression of opinion, on four distinct grounds, which we will now briefly recapitulate.

First, if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for aught we can certainly know, be true. To deny this is to assume our own infallibility.

Secondly, though the silenced opinion be an error, it may, and very commonly does, contain a portion of truth; and since the general or prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied.

Thirdly, even if the received opinion be not only true, but the whole truth; unless it is suffered to be, and actually is, vigorously and earnestly contested, it will, by most of those who receive it, be held in the manner of a prejudice, with little comprehension or feeling of its rational grounds. And not only this, but, fourthly, the meaning of the doctrine itself will be in danger of being lost, or enfeebled, and deprived of its vital effect on the character and conduct: the dogma becoming a mere formal profession, inefficacious for good, but cumbering the ground, and preventing the growth of any real and heartfelt conviction, from reason or personal experience.

Before quitting the subject of freedom of opinion, it is fit to take some notice of those who say, that the free expression of all opinions should be permitted, on condition that the manner be temperate, and do not pass the bounds of fair discussion. Much might be said on the impossibility of fixing where these supposed bounds are to be placed; for if the test be offence to those whose opinions are attacked,

I think experience testifies that this offence is given whenever the attack is telling and powerful, and that every opponent who pushes them hard, and whom they find it difficult to answer, appears to them, if he shows any strong feeling on the subject, an intemperate opponent. But this, though an important consideration in a practical point of view, merges in a more fundamental objection. Undoubtedly the manner of asserting an opinion, even though it be a true one, may be very objectionable, and may justly incur severe censure. But the principal offences of the kind are such as it is mostly impossible, unless by accidental self-betrayal, to bring home to conviction. The gravest of them is, to argue sophistically, to suppress facts or arguments, to misstate the elements of the case, or misrepresent the opposite opinion. But all this, even to the most aggravated degree, is so continually done in perfect good faith, by persons who are not considered, and in many other respects may not deserve to be considered, ignorant or incompetent, that it is rarely possible, on adequate grounds, conscientiously to stamp the misrepresentation as morally culpable; and still less could law presume to interfere with this kind of controversial misconduct. With regard to what is commonly meant by intemperate discussion, namely invective, sarcasm, personality, and the like, the denunciation of these weapons would deserve more sympathy if it were ever proposed to interdict them equally to both sides; but it is only desired to restrain the employment of them against the prevailing opinion: against the unprevailing they may not only be used without

general disapproval, but will be likely to obtain for him who uses them the praise of honest zeal and righteous indignation. Yet whatever mischief arises from their use, is greatest when they are employed against the comparatively defenceless; and whatever unfair advantage can be derived by any opinion from this mode of asserting it, accrues, almost exclusively, to received opinions. The worst offence of this kind which can be committed by a polemic is to stigmatise those who hold the contrary opinion as bad and immoral men. To calumny of this sort, those who hold any unpopular opinion are peculiarly exposed, because they are in general few and uninfluential, and nobody but themselves feels much interested in seeing justice done them; but this weapon is, from the nature of the case, denied to those who attack a prevailing opinion: they can neither use it with safety to themselves, nor, if they could, would it do anything but recoil on their own cause. In general, opinions contrary to those commonly received can only obtain a hearing by studied moderation of language, and the most cautious avoidance of unnecessary offence, from which they hardly ever deviate even in a slight degree without losing ground: while unmeasured vituperation employed on the side of the prevailing opinion, really does deter people from professing contrary opinions, and from listening to those who profess them. For the interest, therefore, of truth and justice, it is far more important to restrain this employment of vituperative language than the other; and, for example, if it were neces-

sary to choose, there would be much more need to discourage offensive attacks on infidelity than on religion. It is, however, obvious that law and authority have no business with restraining either, while opinion ought, in every instance, to determine its verdict by the circumstances of the individual case; condemning everyone, on whichever side of the argument he places himself, in whose mode of advocacy either want of candour, or malignity, bigotry, or intolerance of feeling manifest themselves; but not inferring these vices from the side which a person takes, though it be the contrary side of the question to our own; and giving merited honour to everyone, whatever opinion he may hold, who has calmness to see and honesty to state what his opponents and their opinions really are, exaggerating nothing to their discredit, keeping nothing back which tells. or can be supposed to tell, in their favour. This is the real morality of public discussion: and if often violated, I am happy to think that there are many controversialists who to a great extent observe it, and a still greater number who conscientiously strive towards it.

BIOGRAPHY*

To the lover of books there are few more fascinating or more indispensable companions than the great *Dictionary of National Biography*, which, with the issue of its supplement, has just been brought (for the time being) to a close. The man who has on his shelves, and within easy reach, the sixty-six volumes of this monumental work need never be at a loss for intellectual nourishment and stimulus. Whatever may be his mood, grave or frivolous, strenuous or desultory, whether he wishes to graze, or, as one sometimes does, only to browse, he can hardly fail, as he turns over these infinitely varied pages, to find what fits taste. Literature in our days tends to become more and more specialised; there are vast and ever-increasing tracts which are made inaccessible to the general reader by technicalities of dialect and of form; but in the written records of the lives of men and women we have all a common territory, inexhaustible in its range, perennial in its interest, from which pedantry itself cannot shut us out. It seemed to me, therefore, when the promise which, many months ago, I improvidently made to address the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution was at last coming home

* Delivered at the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, November 15, 1901.

to roost, that I might do worse than speak to you this evening for a few moments on Biography as a form of literary art.

I do not propose to theorise at length upon the subject. It might, indeed, almost be said that the good biography, like the good biographer, is born, not made. There is no kind of composition for which it is more futile to attempt to lay down rules; none in which it is more difficult *a priori* to say why one man should succeed, and another, with equal knowledge, better brains, and a readier pen, should ignominiously fail. We can easily enumerate a number of qualities, some of them commonplace enough, which the ideal biographer ought to possess—quick observation, a retentive memory, a love of detail, a dash of hero-worship. We can also say, negatively, that it is not the least necessary to the production of an immortal biography that the writer—or, for that matter, the subject either—should be a man of genius. But no theory, either of faculty, opportunity, or environment, will enable one to explain the supreme art, indefinable, incommunicable, which could create, say, such a masterpiece as Boswell's *Johnson*. Still, it may, I think, be worth while to endeavour, not as a mere speculation, but by the aid of concrete examples, to realise, if we can, some of the conditions which go to the making, and which account for the charm of a good biography.

There is, I need hardly say, a wide difference, from the point of view both of the reader and the writer, between the summary and condensed record

of a life in a dictionary, and a biography in the larger and fuller sense of the term. But, though the products of different literary methods, both depend for their interest upon their appeal to, and their satisfaction of, the same kind of intellectual curiosity. To the true lover of biography it matters comparatively little how much space the man of whom he is reading occupied in the eyes of contemporaries, or retains in the judgment of posterity. The interest of the life depends far more on the stature of the man than on the scale of his achievements. It must, nevertheless, be admitted that there is a peculiar fascination in trying to pierce through the gloom which veils the life-history of some of the most famous of our race.

To take an obvious, and at the same time an extreme, instance, few things are more interesting to watch than the attempts of scholars and critics, like Dowden and Brandes and Sidney Lee, to reconstruct the life of a man at once so illustrious and so obscure as the greatest of our poets. The case of Shakespeare presents, perhaps, the strangest array of difficulties and paradoxes in the whole range of biography. The most splendid genius of his own or any other time has left behind him hardly a single undisputed trace of his own personality. There has not been preserved so much as a single line in his own handwriting of any of his poems or plays. Such of the plays as were published in his lifetime seem to have been printed from stage copies—to a large extent by literary pirates. The apparently unbroken indifference of the greatest of all artists not

only to posthumous fame, but to the safeguarding against defacement or loss of his own handiwork, is without precedent or parallel. The date and order of his plays, the identity of the "only begetter" of the Sonnets, the manner in which his wealth was acquired, the unproductiveness of his last five years —he died at fifty-two, the same age as Napoleon— his easy acquiescence in the sleek humdrum and the homely dissipations of social and civic life in a small provincial town—that all these questions, and a hundred more, should still be matters of conjecture and controversy is a unique fact in literary history. What else but this tantalising twilight has made it possible for even the most distraught ingenuity to construct the great Baconian hypothesis? The task which confronts the writer of a life like Shakespeare's is not to transcribe and vivify a record; it is rather to solve a problem by the methods of hypothesis and inference. His work is bound to be, not so much an essay in biography, as in the more or less scientific use of the biographic imagination. The difficulty is infinitely enhanced in this particular case by the impersonal quality of most of Shakespeare's writings—a quality which I myself am heretic enough to believe extends to by far the greater part of the Sonnets. We do not know that the greatest teacher of antiquity wrote a single line. Shakespeare, who died less than three hundred years ago, must have written well over a hundred thousand. And yet, thanks to Plato and Xenophon, we have a far more definite and vivid acquaintance with the man Socrates

than we shall ever have with the man Shakespeare.

But dismissing problems of this kind, which have to be judged by a standard of their own, let me say a word first of that form of biography in which success is at once rarest and, when achieved, most complete—autobiography. It may, I think, be laid down, as a maxim of experience, without undue severity, that few autobiographies are really good literature. And the reason lies upon the surface. Self-consciousness is, as a rule, fatal to art, and yet self-consciousness is the essence of autobiography. No man ever sat down to write his own life, not even John Stuart Mill, without becoming for the time an absorbed and concentrated egotist. It is because he is, for the moment at least, so profoundly interesting to and interested in himself, that he feels irresistibly impelled to take posterity into his confidence. The result too often is one of the most unappetising products of the literary kitchen—a nauseating compound of insincerity and unreserve. And yet in the hands of a true artist there is hardly any form of composition which has the same interest and charm. Even Dr. Johnson said that every man's life may best be written by himself. Take, for instance, that which is, I suppose, at once the most shameless and the most successful specimen of its class, the *Confessions* of Rousseau. His object, he tells us, was to show a man (meaning himself) in all the truth of nature, and his belief is (as he also avows) that no reader after going through the *Confessions* will be able to declare him-

self a better man than their author. It is amazing, at first sight, that he can imagine that such a belief will be able to survive the disclosure which he proceeds to make, of ungoverned impulse, of infirmity, and even of baseness. As Mr. Morley says: "Other people wrote polite histories of their outer lives, amply coloured with romantic recollection. Rousseau, with unquailing veracity, plunged into the inmost depths, hiding nothing that would be likely to make him either ridiculous or hateful in common opinion, and inventing nothing that could attract much sympathy or much admiration." Or again, in the words of Mr. Leslie Stephen, "he found realities so painful that he swore that they must be dreams, as dreams were so sweet that they must be true realities." And the same writer sums up his point of view in a sentence of singular felicity when he adds that "Rousseau represents the strange combination of a kind of sensual appetite for pure and simple pleasures." There are few more difficult questions than that which is constantly presenting iteslf to the reader of Rousseau, namely, what ought to be the limit of unreserve in autobiography, if indeed there ought to be any limit at all. You will remember how Boswell was rash enough on one occasion to say to Dr. Johnson, "Sir, I am sometimes troubled with a disposition to stinginess," and Johnson replied, "So am I, sir, but I do not tell it."

The great autobiographies of the world are to be found in many different shapes. Some of the best are spiritual and largely introspective, like Saint

Augustine's *Confessions* or Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, or Newman's *Apologia*. Sometimes, again, they veil or colour under the form of fiction the personal experience of the writer, as in *Consuelo*, or *David Copperfield*, or *Villette*. Sometimes without losing the note of egotism, they are frankly objective and mundane, as in the case of Benvenuto Cellini, and to a large extent of Gibbon. But all that are worthy of a place in this the highest class have one thing in common. They are authentic human documents—the very mirror of the writer's personality, and it is by that quality that they make an appeal to us, more vivid, because more direct, than any narrative by another hand.

I will not venture on any critical estimate of the famous works which I have just named. But let me take, by way of illustrating this branch of the subject, a less known, but, to my thinking, a hardly less remarkable book—the Autobiography of Benjamin Robert Haydon, the painter, one of the most tragic figures in the history of art. The gigantic canvases by which he confidently expected to achieve not only fame but immortality—his "Lazarus," which he sometimes thought his masterpiece, covers nearly 300 square feet—are perhaps as good an illustration as can be found of the difference between the grandiose and the great. He is probably best remembered in these days by Wordsworth's noble sonnet addressed to him as a fellow-worker in the school of "creative art"—

High is our calling, friend.

But Haydon, though cursed with a vain and violent temperament, a prey to ambitions always in excess of his powers of execution, perpetually hovering on the confines of the insanity to which he at last succumbed, was one of the acutest and most accomplished critics, and on the whole the most strenuous and indomitable controversialist of his time. In his journal and his unfinished autobiography he discloses to us his own personality with a freedom from reticence not unworthy of Rousseau, though you will look in vain in Rousseau or any of his imitators for Haydon's simplicity and sincerity. There is not a single phase of his experiences, from the day when he records how, at the age of eighteen, he left his home at Plymouth for London, full of buoyant self-confidence, down to the last pathetic entry, when, in front of his easel, and amid the wreckage of his ideals and his ambitions, he was about to take up the pistol with which he put an end to his life—in the whole of that long, strenuous, disheartening pilgrimage there is nothing that he thought, felt, did, or failed to do, that is not set down faithfully and without reserve. Haydon was an egotist, afflicted by an almost diseased vanity, but no reader can doubt the substantial truth of his picture of himself.*

* In 1846, two months before his tragic death, Haydon opened an exhibition of his pictures at the Egyptian Hall. But Tom Thumb, the American dwarf, proved a greater attraction. On April 21, Haydon notes in his diary: "Tom Thumb had 12,000 people last week. B. R. Haydon 133½ (the ½ a little girl)." Mr. Birrell recalls the lines:

All London flocks to see a dwarf
And leaves a Haydon dying.

No picture of a man, however, whether by himself or by others, is either true or adequate which does not give us also his environment. It is here that so many autobiographies, being little more than the outpouring of self-consciousness, disappoint and baffle us. But here, again, Haydon appears to me to merit a high place. He is said to have been an indifferent painter of portraits with the brush. If he was, it was not, as these pages show, from a lack of power either to observe and remember superficial traits of appearance and manner, or—at least when his prejudices were asleep—to penetrate the depths of character. You will, I think, be grateful if I give you a few illustrations selected almost at random from a long and varied gallery. Here is a glimpse of two of his celebrated contemporaries—Hazlitt, the critic, and Jeremy Bentham, the philosopher. "What a singular compound," he says of Hazlitt, "this man was of malice, candour, cowardice, genius, purity, vice, democracy, and conceit. One day I called on him and found him arranging his hair before a glass, trying different effects, and asking my advice whether he should show his forehead more or less. Bentham lived next door. We used to see him bustling away in his sort of half-running walk in his garden. Both Hazlitt and I often looked with a longing eye from the windows at the white-haired philosopher in his leafy shelter, his head the finest and most venerable ever placed on human shoulders. . . . Once I remember," he goes on, "Bentham came to see Leigh Hunt in Surrey Jail and played battledore and shuttlecock with him.

Hunt told me after of the profound powers of Bentham's mind. He proposed, said Hunt, a reform in the handle of the battledore." No abuse was too vast, and it would seem that no abuse was too small, to escape the reforming passion of the great Utilitarian. Elsewhere he says of Hazlitt—and this, I think, is a very remarkable picture: "As for Hazlitt, it is not to be believed how the destruction of Napoleon affected him. He seemed prostrated in mind and body. He walked about unwashed, unshaved, hardly sober by day, and always intoxicated by night, until at length, wakening as it were from his stupor, he at once left off all stimulating liquors, and never touched them after"—surely one of the quaintest occasions for taking the pledge in the whole history of total abstinence.

Then, again, let me give you a portrait of Wilkie, our great Fife painter, who was his fellow student, and his best friend through life. They visited Paris together in 1814, after the first overthrow of Napoleon. Haydon says that "notwithstanding that Paris was filled with all the nations of the earth, the greatest oddity in it was unquestionably David Wilkie. His horrible French, his strange, tottering, feeble look, his carrying about his prints to make bargains with printsellers, his resolute determination—here I seem to see something of the soil from which he sprang—never to leave the restaurants till he got his change right to a centime, his long disputes about sous and demi-sous with the *dame du comptoir*, while Madame tried to cheat him, and as she pressed her pretty ringed fingers on his arm without making

the least impression, her 'Mais, monsieur,' and his Scottish 'Mais, madame,' were worthy of Molière." Or again, in a different vein, he tells us how he breakfasted with Wordsworth, and Wordsworth, speaking of three of the greatest men of his time, Burke, Fox, and Pitt, said: "You always went from Burke with your mind filled; from Fox with your feelings excited; and from Pitt with wonder at his having the power to make the worse appear the better reason." One is reminded of Porson's remark, that while Pitt carefully considered his sentences before he uttered them, Fox threw himself into the middle of his, and left it to God Almighty to get him out again.

Here is another of Haydon's sketches—the sketch of a money-lender—one of the fraternity to whom he paid in the course of his life a long series of unsatisfactory visits. This is his first experience. He says: "When you deal with a rascal, turn him to the light. I got him to the light. His eyes shrank, his face was the meanest I ever saw; the feeble mouth, little nose, brassy eyes, blotched skin, low forehead, and fetid smell all announced a reptile." And afterwards, when after a more extended experience of this gentleman and his kind, he found himself at last in the King's Bench prison, arrested for debt, he writes—and this is characteristic of the man: "King's Bench. Well! I am in prison. So were Bacon, Raleigh, and Cervantes." He came here to Edinburgh in 1821 to exhibit one of his prodigious canvases, and it may be interesting to you to know his first impressions of this great city. "The season in Edinburgh," he

says, "is the severest part of the winter. Princes Street in a clear sunset, with the Castle and the Pentland Hills in radiant glory, and the crowd illumined by the setting sun, was a sight perfectly original. First you would see limping Sir Walter, with Lord Meadowbank; then tripped Jeffrey, keen, restless, and fidgety; you then met Wilson or Lockhart, or Allan or Thompson, or Raeburn, as if all had agreed to make their appearance at once."

Of Keats he writes: "The last time I ever saw him was at Hampstead, lying on a white bed with a book, hectic and on his back, irritable in his weakness, and wounded at the way he had been used. He seemed to be going out of life with a contempt of this world and no hope of the other." Or, finally, to close my series of impressions from this storehouse of living portraits, take what he says of Scott and Wordsworth, who had spent the morning with him together: "It is singular how success and the want of it operate on two extraordinary men —Walter Scott and Wordsworth. Scott enters a room and sits at table with the coolness and self-possession of conscious fame; Wordsworth with a mortified elevation of head, as if fearful he was not estimated as he desired. Scott is always cool and very amusing; Wordsworth often egotistical and overwhelming. Scott seems to appear less than he really is, while Wordsworth struggles to be thought at the moment greater than he is suspected to be. I think that Scott's success would have made Wordsworth insufferable, while Wordsworth's failure would not have rendered Scott a whit less delightful. Scott

is the companion of nature in all her feelings and freaks; while Wordsworth follows her like an apostle sharing her solemn moods and impressions." I do not think it would be possible to present a more vivid contrast in fewer words between two great and distinguished men.

But I must leave autobiography and turn for a few moments to biography in the stricter sense—the writing of one man's life by another. In that form of literature no language is richer than ours; it may be doubted whether any language is so rich. *Colonel Hutchinson's Life* by his wife, Roger North's *Lives of the Norths*, Boswell's *Johnson*, Lockhart's *Scott*, Carlyle's *Sterling*, Stanley's *Arnold*, Lewes' *Goethe*, Mrs. Gaskell's *Charlotte Brontë*, Trevelyan's *Macaulay*—these are only the titles which first suggest themselves in a brilliant and inexhaustible catalogue. Yet, with the single but large exception of fiction, there is no form of writing which lends itself so readily to the production of that which is trivial and ephemeral. It is hardly necessary to rule out, from the point of view of art, the monuments which filial piety or misdirected friendship is constantly raising to those who deserved and probably desired to be forgotten. Equally to be excluded, from the same point of view, is biography written with a purpose—a class of which those of us who were carefully brought up can recall not a few doleful specimens. Mr. Disraeli speaks somewhere, I think in *Coningsby*, of a voluminous history which once had a great vogue as "Mr. Wordy's History of the War, in twenty volumes, to prove that Providence was on

the side of the Tories." The same taint of a perhaps laudable but certainly irrelevant purpose hangs about the didactic or edifying biography. It is not the function of a biography to be a magnified epitaph or an expanded tract. Its business is the vivid delineation of a person, and for its success there are two obvious conditions—first, that the person delineated should have the power of permanently interesting his fellow-men; and, next, that the delineator should be able to recall him to life. The enormous increase, not only in the number but in the popularity of this class of books, is probably due more to the growth of the first class than the second. Man's interest in man is always growing, but from the nature of the case there is not and never can be an academy of biographers.

And here it may be worth noting that some of the most interesting personalities are the most elusive, and, therefore, the worst subjects for biography. There is about them a kind of bouquet which, after they are gone, can never be revived. For their friends, they may be brought back to life by the reminiscence of some slight, perhaps trivial, characteristic. It may be a trait or even a trick, a gesture, the inflexion of a voice, the turn of a phrase. But, for those who never knew them, not even the highest and subtlest art can reproduce them as they really were. We have all of us known such men. The late Master of Balliol, Mr. Jowett, was one. Lord Bowen, I think, was another. But let us suppose that the character and the life can be reproduced. What is the secret of the art which can make them

live again? Sometimes, of course, the biographer may be said not so much to recreate as to create his hero. One cannot help feeling a suspicion of the kind in reading a book like Carlyle's *Life of Sterling*. Sometimes, on the other hand, his function is exactly the opposite, and he is content to let his hero tell his own tale out of his own sayings or letters. An admirable example is Mr. Colvin's well-known edition of the *Letters of Stevenson*. The best selection of letters is, however, an inadequate substitute for a real biography. Indeed, one often feels that if we were given fewer of a man's letters to his friends, and more of his friends' letters to him, we should get to know him better because, among other reasons, we should be better able to realise how his personality affected and appealed to others.

Look for a moment to the list of famous Lives which I enumerated a little time ago, and you will find in them, at any rate, one common feature. With the single exception of Lewes' *Goethe*, there is not one of these great biographies which was not written either by a near relative or an intimate friend. The authors were, no doubt, all of them, in their degree literary artists; but we can measure the enormous advantage to the biographer of personal intimacy when we compare the result of their own, or in some cases of still greater writers' attempts to bring back to life those whom they have never known in the flesh. "And did you once see Shelley plain?" asks Robert Browning. To have "seen Shelley plain" would have been, indeed, a godsend to some of the accomplished gentlemen who have contributed

to "the chatter about Harriet." The drawbacks of intimacy for this purpose are, of course, sufficiently obvious. The bias of kinship, the blindness of discipleship, are undeniable hindrances to just and even-handed judgment. But the true biographer is not a judge. He has no theory of his hero; he presents him to us as he appeared to those among whom he acted and moved and suffered; the living figure of a man whom we feel we should recognise in another world; a figure, moreover, which is not always the same, which grows and changes under the stress of circumstance; a figure which the biographer, from his own store of direct knowledge, has, as it were, to be constantly recharging with life. It is this quality which gives vividness, charm, undying freshness to the pages of Boswell and Lockhart. The biographer who has not this advantage and has to seek for it elsewhere is often in sore straits for the material which he needs. Do you remember Dr Johnson's account, at Mr. Dilly's dinner, of his strenuous, but not very successful, quest for authentic memories of Dryden? There were two people who had known Dryden well still alive—M'Swinney and Cibber. And what had they to tell? M'Swinney's only information was that "At Wills' coffee-house Dryden had a particular chair set for himself by the fire in winter, and called his winter chair, and it was carried out for him to the balcony in summer, and then called his summer chair." Cibber could only say: "He was a decent old man, arbiter of critical disputes at Wills'." There is no nutrition to be got out of chopped straw like this. Boswell: "Yet

Cibber was a man of observation." Johnson: "I think not."

Let me again take by way of illustration not a celebrated book, one which in these days has probably few readers, a book in which a wife tells the story of a man who was in his time a solid and fruitful worker in business, in politics, and in literature. I mean *The Personal Life of George Grote*, by his widow, Harriet Grote, published in 1873. Grote was not a genius but he was a man of many interests and activities—a banker, for many years member for the City of London, a politician who advocated with serene and irrepressible courage unpopular causes, and who at last, in despair at the inertness of the public opinion of his time, abandoned public life, devoted himself to research, and gave up twelve years to writing *The History of Greece*. Mrs. Grote, who was a woman of strong individuality, tells us in her preface how, late on in his life, her husband one day came into her room, and finding her poring over papers, asked, "What are you so busy over, Harriet?" "Well, I am arranging some materials for a sketch of your life." "My life!" exclaimed Grote, "there is absolutely nothing to tell." "Not in the way of adventure, I grant, but there is something nevertheless—your life is the history of a Mind." "That is it," he rejoined, with animation. "But can you tell it?" A conjugal query. But Mrs. Grote had no doubt about the answer, and proceeded with her task. Happily for its interest as a biography, the book is something very different from "the history of a mind." Even the great Goethe himself

becomes barely endurable when he soliloquises over the stages of his own mental development.

Mrs. Grote had a keen eye, and the selective judgment which is peculiarly necessary when a wife undertakes to write the life of her husband. Grote fell early in life among the Utilitarians, and was brought in due course by James Mill to the feet of Jeremy Bentham. You have had one picture of the Patriarch already from the pen of Haydon. Here is a sidelight on the same subject from Mrs. Grote. "Mr. Bentham," she says, "being a man of easy fortune, kept a good table, and took pleasure in receiving guests at his board, though never more than one at a time. To his one guest he would talk fluently, yet without caring to listen in his turn." To this convivial monologue Mr. Grote seems now and again to have had the honour of being admitted. His engagement to Harriet Lewin, who became his wife and biographer, was protracted by business and other difficulties beyond the ordinary span. He sought to appease his impatience by learning German, playing on the 'cello, and drenching himself with political economy. I quote a typical entry, dated 1818, from the diary which he kept for his lady: "Dined alone. Read some scenes in Schiller's 'Don Carlos.' After reading these I practised on the bass for about an hour. Then drank tea, and read Adam Smith's incomparable chapter on the Mercantile System until eleven, when I went to bed." That is how the young Utilitarians whiled away their solitary evenings. At last they married. Things were not at first altogether easy. Mrs. George Grote, as she calls herself, had,

she tells us with delightful frankness, "numerous friends and connections among the aristocratic portion of society"; but, as she says, "the aversion at this early period of his life to everything tinctured with aristocratic tastes and forms of opinion which animated G. G.'s mind obliged his wife to relinquish her intercourse with almost all families of rank and position rather than displease her (somewhat intolerant) partner." Another drawback was—again to quote her own words—that "the elder Mr. Grote bore very little share in the labours of the banking house during these ten years, but appropriated the greater portion of the profits."

Mrs. Grote gives an animated narrative, which will not bear abridgement, of her husband's public life, with its strenuous labours and many disappointments, and of the tranquil and industrious later years, which were consecrated to scholarship and philosophy. It is full of vivid sketches of men and events, with not a few of those living touches which light up the past for us—as, for example, when she records that in 1837 Lord William Bentinck, the famous Governor-General of India, calling on her after a dinner-party, said: "I thought your American very pleasant company, and it was a surprise to me. for I never in my life before met an American in society." It would seem that the world gets rounder as the years roll on. In 1855 the twelfth and last volume of the great History was published, and Mrs. Grote determined to signalise the event. "I had," she says, "a bowl of punch brewed at Christmas for our little household at History Hut (Grote's work-

shop) in celebration of the completion of the *opus magnum*, Grote himself sipping the delicious mixture with great satisfaction, while manifesting little emotion outwardly."

This homely scene calls up, if only by way of contrast, the accounts which still greater writers than Grote have given of a like event in their lives. The passage in Gibbon's *Memoirs* is deservedly famous, but it will bear requoting: "It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my History, the life of the historian must be short and precarious." Dr. Birkbeck Hill, in his excellent edition of *Gibbon's Life*, reminds us in this context of Carlyle's description, in a letter to Emerson, of the completion of his *French Revolution*: "You, I hope, can have little conception of the feeling with which I wrote the last word of it, one night in early January, when the clock was striking ten,

and our frugal Scotch supper coming in. I did not cry; I did not pray; but could have done both." Grote sipping his punch, Carlyle sitting down to his oatmeal, Gibbon pacing the acacia walk, each having finished a task which had added a masterpiece to literature—these are figures which deserve to live in the memory.

In truth, the picture which we carry about with us of some of the most illustrious men is created, not so much by the rounded and measured story of their lives, as by a single act or incident or sentence which stands out from the pages, whether of the best or of the most inadequate biography. I think it is Boswell who quotes Plutarch to the effect that it is very often "an action of small note, a short saying, or a jest, shall distinguish a person's real character more than the greatest signs or the most important battles." It is so with Bentley, who lives by virtue of a single saying, to many who know little or nothing of the letters of Phalaris or the history of Trinity College. "It was said to old Bentley"—I am quoting from *The Tour to the Hebrides*—"upon the attacks against him—'Why, they'll write you down.' 'No, sir,' he replied, 'depend upon it, no man was ever written down but by himself.'" Or take the notable answer of Bolingbroke, when it was suggested to him that he should make some rejoinder to the virulent assaults of Bishop Warburton: "I never wrestle with a chimney sweeper." Or, again (you will forgive for a moment, and not be unduly shocked by a bit of bad language), when, on the field of Waterloo, Lord Uxbridge, riding by the side of the

Duke of Wellington, lost his leg, the cannon shot which struck him having passed first over the withers of the Duke's charger, "Copenhagen." "By God, I've lost my leg," cried Uxbridge. "Have you, by God?" was all the Duke's reply. You all remember the page in Lockhart which describes how, on the occasion of George IV's visit to this city, Sir Walter Scott, having claimed for his own the glass in which the King had just drunk his health, and reverently placed it in his pocket, found on his return home that Crabbe had arrived as his guest, and in his joy and excitement at greeting the poet, sat down upon the royal present, and crushed it into fragments. Could anything be more characteristic of the man? Or—to take one other illustration from the memories of this place—what can be at once more illuminating and more pathetic than the last words of Dr. Adam, the head of the High School, who had numbered Scott himself, and Brougham, and Jeffrey among his pupils: "But it grows dark. Boys, you may go." It is by seizing on incidents like these, small in themselves, but revealing as with a sudden flash the heights and depths of character, that biography brings back to life the illustrious dead.

Let me give you an Oriental apologue, which is not beside the point. "I forbid you," said the tyrannical Emperor to the Chief of the Tribunal of History, "to speak a word more of me." The Mandarin began to write. "What are you doing now?" asked the Emperor. "I am writing down the order your Majesty has just given me." The Mandarin was a born biographer.

But I feel that I am becoming garrulous, and that it is time to bring to a close this desultory and far from philosophical discourse. Much has been left unsaid. Upon one vexed question in the ethics of biography, which was debated with much vehemence a few years ago, first over Mr. Froude's *Memoirs of Carlyle*, and then over Mr. Purcell's *Life of Cardinal Manning*, I will only remind you of Voltaire's saying: "We owe consideration to the living; to the dead we owe truth only." The abiding interest of biography for each of us depends after all upon our estimate of the worth and reality of human life. Byron in one of his early letters—I quote from the new edition by which Mr. Prothero has laid all lovers of literature under a heavy debt—expresses in his characteristic way the cynical view: "When one subtracts from life infancy (which is vegetation), sleep, eating, and swilling, buttoning, and unbuttoning,—how much remains of downright existence? The summer of a dormouse." If so, the less said about it, the sooner it is forgotten, the better. But, in truth, it is because we all feel that life is to us the most serious of realities that we crave to know more of the lives of others. As Emerson says: "The essentials in it—youth and love, grief and action—we all share; the difference of circumstance is only costume." And thus the reading of biography becomes something more than a form of literary recreation. True, it furnishes the memory with a portrait gallery of interesting faces. True, it makes history and philosophy and poetry vivid with the personalities of the men to whom we owe great causes, great

systems, great thoughts. But it does more than this. It brings comfort, it enlarges sympathy, it expels selfishness, it quickens aspiration. "I console myself," says Emerson again, "in the poverty of my thoughts, in the paucity of great men, in the malignity and dulness of the nations, by falling back on these recollections, and seeing what the prolific soul could beget on actual nature. Then I dare; I also will essay to be." And if at times we are tempted (as who is not?) to doubt the ultimate purpose and meaning of human existence, when we think of the millions of lives which deserve no record—lives "which came to nothing," lives full of "deeds as well undone"*—we must take refuge in the faith to which, in lines that ought not to die, Edward FitzGerald has given noble and moving expression:

For like a child, sent with a fluttering light,
To feel his way along a gusty night,
Man walks the world: again, and yet again,
The lamp shall be by fits of passion slain;
But shall not He who sent him from the door
Relight the lamp once more, and yet once more

* R. Browning, "A Toccata of Galuppi."
† Attar's "Bird Parliament."

THE HABIT OF READING

"All habits are bad." So declared an unknown aphorist, and though a grain of truth may often be discovered lurking in a magnum of error, it is perhaps as well that the name of this dogmatic gentleman should not be known, for his aphorism flies in the face—as is, indeed, very much the habit of these sayings—of another and a more famous aphorism that declares "Habit to be a second nature." Beware of paradoxes! They tickle. But so do straws. Truths never tickle. "All habits are bad" is a paradoxical saying, "Habit is a second nature" a true one.

That some habits are bad must be admitted—drug-taking, for example. And as it is not easy to distinguish generally between good habits and bad ones, I at once boldly ask this question—is it wise or foolish for a young fellow, anxious "to cleanse his way," to set about forming the fixed habit of reading?

Is it not possible—though hardly probable—that having once formed this habit of reading it may so grow upon its victim as to bring down the full weight of the dread Miltonic censure, for which room had to be found in the almost-inspired pages of *Paradise Regained*:

Many books
Wise men have said are wearisom; who reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and a judgment equal or superior
(*And what he brings, what need he elsewhere seek*)—
Uncertain and unsettl'd still remains
Deep verst in books and shallow in himself.

Really this sublime Milton of ours goes too far in this parenthesis of his, "*And what he brings, what need he elsewhere seek,*" for was not this Lord Foppington's excuse for never reading anything at all, being well satisfied, so he declared, with the sprouts of his own brain?—and yet, I am sure, Milton would never have tolerated his lordship for two minutes.

Happily, however, there is no need for me to dive into this controversy, for I have nothing else on my mind but to urge upon my juniors in their laudable pursuit of pleasure, and with a view to the possible length of their days, early to form the habit—and it is a habit as much as smoking a pipe—of reading all sorts of books, long books and short ones, poetry and prose, novels old as well as new, biographies, histories, science, what you will! I say nothing against bridge or any other game of cards. Billiards is a noble pursuit. Before a chessboard I uncover as in the presence of royalty. To dominoes I was once much addicted, though now I play no more, death having robbed me of my rival. Whilst as for the sports of the field they need no advocacy. All these habits are easily formed and

seldom willingly abandoned. It is hardly so with the habit of reading, for, strange to say, even when once acquired it is easily lost. How many men turned forty read anything save their newspaper! Once they may have had the habit, but, if so, they have lost it. What a melancholy picture is that of an aged and once literate statesman—on the retired list—wandering up and down his magnificent library, muttering miserably to himself, "I can no longer read."

First, then, my advice is—form the habit of reading, and, having formed it, stick to it. All habits are not bad, and some are of the very salt of life. What a glimpse into the dark abyss of melancholia is afforded by that chance remark of Balzac's in *Le Cousin Pons*, "Many a man on the brink of suicide has been plucked back on the threshold of death by the thought of the café where he plays his nightly game of dominoes." What a cheerful, friendly, life-sustaining habit! How right I was to be fond of dominoes! Yet regarding life as a whole, as something to be endured and if possible enjoyed, from its beginning to its may be solitary end, from *Robinson Crusoe* to *The Three Musketeers*, from *The Three Musketeers* to *War and Peace*, I am certain that there is no greater gift of fortune than to have acquired and retained the power to "go back to one's book" with eagerness and joy.

How is this habit to be acquired?

The first step is to breed an easy familiarity with the outsides of books, and to feel comfortable in their company as an ostler amongst horses.

How is this familiarity to be obtained?

The run of a large library is almost essential, and in these days, when really fine libraries are to be found in all quarters of the town, this is not very difficult. To get to know the books as they stand on their shelves is a pleasant increase of one's acquaintances. That is Walpole in Peter Cunningham's nine volumes, there is Gibbon in twelve (for he cannot be read in less). That long, dusty series must be *The Annual Register.* There surely is Boswell in Dr. Hill's six volumes, and Johnson's own works in either nine or twelve. How many volumes does Fielding occupy, how many Richardson, and how many Sterne? These, believe me, are not foolish questions. As the Alpine expert can pick out his peaks from the terrace at Berne, so the book-lover, on entering a library, even a municipal library, finds himself at home.

The book-reader, as he grows in maturity, is not likely to be altogether content with municipal libraries, but it is not given to many of us to possess thirty thousand volumes, and most of us find it difficult to stow away even five thousand in the home for heroes where we are condemned to live. But the familiarity of which I have been writing, though only to be gained from access to large libraries, and the study of second-hand book-sellers' catalogues and the run of their shops, in no way leads to discontent with the few volumes we happen to possess of our very own. No sensible man envies the Bodleian, or wishes that the catalogue of his library should be in a hundred volumes.

To repeat my point, the habit of reading, if it is to become so confirmed as to bid defiance to the crust of middle age, is best fostered and stimulated by cultivating in as many ways as possible an extreme familiarity with both the outsides and the title-pages of good books. I have known men of university breeding who are positively as uneasy in the presence of a book as Mr. Gladstone used to be in the company of a Nonconformist minister of religion. I am not blaming them, for they may possess other and equally enduring tastes, but I am only concerned to make out that amongst men's habits, the habit of reading, if persisted in to the end, is one of the most pleasure-giving, and is—probably—the most lasting.

The next step to take, after establishing a certain measure of easy familiarity with books as *things*, like the ace of clubs or the king of diamonds, is to gratify your natural tastes by setting yourself more or less diligently and day by day to read what you like best. Never force your taste, but feed it. Even reading what you like best after such a fashion as to form an enduring habit demands an effort of the will and an occasional forced discipline. It is easy to lay down a book half read and to forget to take it up again, and this is all the easier when there is no particular occasion ever to take it up again, for I am not thinking of any such pursuit as "reading for an examination," but of reading for the pleasure of reading and nothing else.

It is amazing how this habit of reading for pleasure slips clean out of people's lives. It often

seems completely forgotten. The books may be on the shelves, but they are seldom taken down, and they remain unexercised. Sometimes they are not on the shelves at all, and then what a cruel fate it is for any child to be born within those bookless walls.

How shocking it would have been to come into a house which did not contain *The Essays of Elia*, or the novels of Scott and Dickens! Yet even as it is, when cheap and excellent reprints abound and household libraries are enormously improved, the habit of reading for pleasure is by no means general.

This habit once formed, and so formed as to become "a second nature," secures that the path through life, however narrow and stony and unromantic in its surroundings, often becomes pleasant and at times exciting. The bank clerk with a good book awaiting him in his rooms walks home after dining in Soho with a light step and shuts the door behind him with a bang. Has he not *Phineas Finn* to finish? Or is he not in the middle of Clarendon's *History of the Great Rebellion*? One good book leads to another, and opens out new vistas of endless enjoyment. Is it not worth while to learn French in order to read Dumas, Balzac, and Anatole France, to say nothing of hundreds of other delightful French books in every branch of human intelligence?

It never does to ride a hobby too hard. An overdrawn banking account, a solitary hearthstone, a silenced, childish voice on the staircase—these

are things not to be robbed of their sting by all the best books in the universe. The love of reading is no dope or drug to buy oblivion or to shut down the fountain of tears, but even in grief it may hold out a helping hand, and, as we put it, roughly but not unfeelingly, "pull us through" our troubles.

Why, then, should we neglect this source of comfort and enjoyment? By never forming this habit, or by allowing it to die down at forty and drop out of life, we are exposing ourselves unnecessarily to hours of boredom, *ennui*, and depression. As we grow older it is not much that life has to offer us. "My grief lies onward and my joy behind," is one of the many sad lines in Shakespeare's sonnets, but it is one most of us are forced to repeat every day, either with a grim smile or a barely concealed tear.

A reading man can always find something to read, for even good books in your own line are often mysteriously overlooked for years. You knew about them, but somehow, you had never read them. I have just finished reading for the first time one of the most interesting of English biographies in two stout volumes. I have been long familiar with their outsides in libraries and bookshops, but until the other day, when I bought a copy coming from the library of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, I had never held them in my hands. I am referring to the well-known life of Sir Joshua Reynolds, by Leslie, R.A., and Tom Taylor, published in 1865. The book covers familiar ground, and told

me over again some of the best-known stories of the England of the eighteenth century—stories of Johnson and Burke and Gibbon, of Goldsmith, of Garrick and Wilkes, etc. But in the background of the picture was the figure of the mild but pleasure-loving painter, the most 'invulnerable' of men, and all the old stories gathered a new lustre. What a record it is of a painter's life! What a list of great pictures, and of generations of fair women both as children and as mothers! Sir Joshua's sitters—his soldiers, his sailors, his poets, his actors, his statesmen, his fair and frail beauties—are by themselves a dictionary of national biography. Then his dinner-parties! It would be a pleasant employment for two or three evenings to go through the two volumes and make out a list of his dinner-parties, and of the men and women with whom he sat at meat—the best company that ever met in England.

I don't know that I have ever enjoyed a book more, which is a good deal for a septuagenarian to admit.

And now, having formed this habit of reading, how is it to be retained past middle age when we are so apt, like Eton boys, "to grow heavy"? Herein I fear the patient must minister to himself, yet it may be worth while inquiring why we should run this risk in the middle passage of our lives. What is the philosophy of it? Why should there be this deadening of the soul? Perhaps only a poet can tell us. Listen then to Matthew Arnold:

Dear saints, it is not sorrow as I hear,
Nor suffering that shuts up eye and ear
To all which has delighted them before.
And let us be what we were once no more!
No! We may suffer deeply, yet retain
Power to be moved and soothed for all our pain
By what of old pleased us, and will again.
No! 'Tis the gradual furnace of the world,
In whose hot air our spirits are unfurl'd
Until they crumble, or else grow like steel,
Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring,

Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel
But takes away the power—this can avail
By drying up our joy in everything,
To make our former pleasures all seem stale.

GIBBON

Happiness is the word that immediately rises to the mind at the thought of Edward Gibbon: and happiness in its widest connotation—including good fortune as well as enjoyment. Good fortune, indeed, followed him from the cradle to the grave in the most tactful way possible; occasionally it appeared to fail him; but its absence always turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Out of a family of seven he alone had the luck to survive—but only with difficulty; and the maladies of his childhood opened his mind to the pleasures of study and literature. His mother died; but her place was taken by a devoted aunt, whose care brought him through the dangerous years of adolescence to a vigorous manhood. His misadventures at Oxford saved him from becoming a don. His exile to Lausanne, by giving him a command of the French language, initiated him into European culture, and at the same time enabled him to lay the foundations of his scholarship. His father married again; but his stepmother remained chlidless and became one of his dearest friends. He fell in love; the match was forbidden; and he escaped the dubious joys of domestic life with the future Madame Necker. While he was allowed to travel on the Continent, it seemed doubtful for some time whether his father would have the resources or the generosity to send

him over the Alps into Italy. His fate hung in the balance; but at last his father produced the necessary five hundred pounds and, in the autumn of 1764, Rome saw her historian. His father died at exactly the right moment, and left him exactly the right amount of money. At the age of thirty-three Gibbon found himself his own master, with a fortune just sufficient to support him as an English gentleman of leisure and fashion. For ten years he lived in London, a member of Parliament, a placeman, and a diner-out, and during those ten years he produced the first three volumes of his History. After that he lost his place, failed to obtain another, and, finding his income unequal to his expenses, returned to Lausanne, where he took up his residence in the house of a friend, overlooking the Lake of Geneva. It was the final step in his career, and no less fortunate than all the others. In Lausanne he was rich once more, he was famous, he enjoyed a delightful combination of retirement and society. Before another ten years were out he had completed his History; and in ease, dignity, and absolute satisfaction his work in this world was accomplished.

One sees in such a life an epitome of the blessings of the eighteenth century—the wonderful μηδὲν ἄγαν of that most balmy time—the rich fruit ripening slowly on the sun-warmed wall, and coming inevitably to its delicious perfection. It is difficult to imagine, at any other period in history, such a combination of varied qualities, so beautifully balanc-

ed—the profound scholar who was also a brilliant man of the world—the votary of cosmopolitan culture, who never for a moment ceased to be a supremely English "character." The ten years of Gibbon's life in London afford an astonishing spectacle of interacting energies. By what strange power did he succeed in producing a masterpiece of enormous erudition and perfect form, while he was leading the gay life of a man about town, spending his evenings at White's or Boodle's or the Club, attending Parliament, oscillating between his house in Bentinck Street, his country cottage at Hampton Court, and his little establishment at Brighton, spending his summers in Bath or Paris, and even, at odd moments, doing a little work at the Board of Trade, to show that his place was not entirely a sinecure? Such a triumph could only have been achieved by the sweet reasonableness of the eighteenth century. "Monsieur Gibbon n'est point mon homme," said Rousseau. Decidedly! The prophet of the coming age of sentiment and romance could have nothing in common with such a nature. It was not that the historian was a mere frigid observer of the golden mean—far from it. He was full of fire and feeling. His youth had been at moments riotous—night after night he had reeled hallooing down St. James's Street. Old age did not diminish the natural warmth of his affections; the beautiful letter—a model of its kind—written on the death of his aunt, in his fiftieth year, is a proof of it. But the fire and the feeling were controlled and co-ordinated. Boswell was a Rousseau-ite, one of the first of the Romantics, an

inveterate sentimentalist, and nothing could be more complete than the contrast between his career and Gibbon's. He, too, achieved a glorious triumph; but it was by dint of the sheer force of native genius asserting itself over the extravagance and disorder of an agitated life—a life which, after a desperate struggle, seemed to end at last in darkness and shipwreck. With Gibbon there was never any struggle: everything came naturally to him—learning and dissipation, industry and indolence, affection and scepticism—in the correct proportions; and he enjoyed himself up to the very end.

To complete the picture one must notice another antithesis: the wit, the genius, the massive intellect, were housed in a physical mould that was ridiculous. A little figure, extraordinarily rotund, met the eye, surmounted by a top-heavy head, with a button nose, planted amid a vast expanse of cheek and ear, and chin upon chin rolling downward. Nor was this appearance only; the odd shape reflected something in the inner man. Mr. Gibbon, it was noticed, was always slightly over-dressed; his favourite wear was flowered velvet. He was a little vain, a little pompous; at the first moment one almost laughed; then one forgot everything under the fascination of that even flow of admirably intelligent, exquisitely turned, and most amusing sentences. Among all his other merits this obviously ludicrous egotism took its place. The astonishing creature was able to make a virtue even of absurdity. Without that touch of nature he would have run the risk of being too much of a good thing; as it was there

was no such danger; he was preposterous and a human being.

It is not difficult to envisage the character and the figure; what seems strange, and remote, and hard to grasp is the connection between this individual and the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. The paradox, indeed, is so complete as to be almost romantic. At a given moment—October 15, 1764—at a given place—the Capitoline Hill, outside the church of Aracoeli—the impact occurred between the serried centuries of Rome and Edward Gibbon. His life, his work, his fame, his place in the history of civilisation, followed from that circumstance. The point of his achievement lay precisely in the extreme improbability of it. The utter incongruity of those combining elements produced the masterpiece—the gigantic ruin of Europe through a thousand years, mirrored in the mind of an eighteenth-century English gentleman.

How was the miracle accomplished? Needless to say, Gibbon was a great artist—one of those rare spirits, with whom a vital and penetrating imagination and a supreme capacity for general conceptions express themselves instinctively in an appropriate form. That the question has ever been not only asked but seriously debated, whether History was an art, is certainly one of the curiosities of human ineptitude. What else can it possibly be? It is obvious that History is not a science: it is obvious that History is not the accumulation of facts, but the relation of them. Only the pendantry of incomplete academic persons could have given birth to such

a monstrous supposition. Facts relating to the past, when they are collected without art, are compilations; and compilations, no doubt, may be useful; but they are no more History than butter, eggs, salt and herbs are an omelette. That Gibbon was a great artist, therefore, is implied in the statement that he was a great historian; but what is interesting is the particular nature of his artistry. His whole genius was pre-eminently classical; order, lucidity, balance, precision—the great classical qualities—dominate his work; and his History is chiefly remarkable as one of the supreme monuments of Classic Art in European literature.

"L'ordre est ce qu'il y a de plus rare dans les opérations de l'esprit." Gibbon's work is a magnificent illustration of the splendid dictum of Fénelon. He brought order out of the enormous chaos of his subject—a truly stupendous achievement! With characteristic good fortune, indeed, the material with which he had to cope was still just not too voluminous to be digested by a single extremely competent mind. In the following century even a Gibbon would have collapsed under the accumulated mass of knowledge at his disposal. As it was, by dint of a superb constructive vision, a serene self-confidence, a very acute judgment, and an astonishing facility in the manipulation of material, he was able to dominate the known facts. To dominate, nothing more; anything else would have been foreign to his purpose. He was a classicist; and his object was not comprehension but illumination. He drove a straight, firm road through the vast unexplored forest of Roman

history; his readers could follow with easy pleasure along the wonderful way; they might glance, as far as their eyes could reach, into the entangled recesses on either side of them; but they were not invited to stop, or wander, or camp out, or make friends with the natives; they must be content to look and to pass on.

It is clear that Gibbon's central problem was the one of the exclusion: how much, and what. was he to leave out? This was largely a question of scale—always one of the major difficulties in literary composition—and it appears from several passages in the Autobiographies that Gibbon paid particular attention to it. Incidentally, it may be observed that the six Autobiographies were not so much excursions in egotism—though no doubt it is true that Gibbon was not without a certain fondness for what he himself called " the most disgusting of the pronouns "—as exercises on the theme of scale. Every variety of compression and expansion is visible among those remarkable pages; but apparently, since the manuscripts were left in an unfinished state, Gibbon still felt, after the sixth attempt, that he had not discovered the right solution. Even with the scale of the History he was not altogether satisfied; the chapters on Christianity, he thought, might, with further labour, have been considerably reduced. But even more fundamental than the element of scale, there was something else that, in reality, conditioned the whole treatment of his material, the whole scope and nature of his History; and that was the style in which it was written. The style once fixed, every-

thing else followed. Gibbon was well aware of this. He wrote his first chapter three times over, his second and third twice: then at last he was satisfied, and after that he wrote on without a hitch. In particular the problem of exclusion was solved. Gibbon's style is probably the most exclusive in literature. By its very nature it bars out a great multitude of human energies. It makes sympathy impossible, it takes no cognisance of passion, it turns its back upon religion with a withering smile. But that was just what was wanted. Classic beauty came instead. By the penetrating influence of style—automatically, inevitably—lucidity, balance and precision were everywhere introduced; and the miracle of order was established over the chaos of a thousand years.

Of course, the Romantics raised a protest. "Gibbon's style," said Coleridge, "is detestable; but," he added, "it is not the worst thing about him." Critics of the later nineteenth century were less consistent. They admired Gibbon for everything except his style, imagining that his History would have been much improved if it had been written in some other way; they did not see that, if it had been written in any other way, it would have ceased to exist; just as St. Paul's would cease to exist if it were re-built in Gothic. Obsessed by the colour and movement of romantic prose, they were blind to the subtlety, the clarity, the continuous strength of Gibbon's writing. Gibbon could turn a bold phrase with the best of them—"the fat slumbers of the Church," for instance—if he wanted to; but he very rarely wanted to; such effects would have disturbed

the easy, close-knit, homogeneous surface of his work. His use of words is, in fact, extremely delicate. When, describing St. Simeon Stylites on his pillar, he speaks of "this last and lofty station," he succeeds, with the least possible emphasis, merely by the combination of those two alliterative epithets with that particular substantive, in making the whole affair ridiculous. One can almost see his shoulders shrug. The nineteenth century found him pompous; they did not relish the irony beneath the pomp. He produces some of his most delightful effects by rhythm alone. In the *Vindication*—a work which deserves to be better known, for it shows us Gibbon, as one sees him nowhere else, really letting himself go—there is an admirable example of this. "I still think," he says, in reply to a criticism by Dr. Randolph, "I still think that an hundred Bishops, with Athanasius at their head, were as competent judges of the discipline of the fourth century, as even the Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford." Gibbon's irony, no doubt, is the salt of his work; but, like all irony, it is the product of style. It was not for nothing that he read through every year the *Lettres Provinciales* of Pascal. From this point of view it is interesting to compare him with Voltaire. The irony of the great Frenchman was a flashing sword—extreme, virulent, deadly—a terrific instrument of propaganda. Gibbon uses the weapon with far more delicacy; he carves his enemy "as a dish fit for the Gods"; his mocking is aloof, almost indifferent, and perhaps, in the long run, for that very reason, even more effective.

At every period of his life Gibbon is a pleasant thing to contemplate, but perhaps most pleasant of all in the closing weeks of it, during his last visit to England. He had hurried home from Lausanne to join his friend Lord Sheffield, whose wife had died suddenly, and who, he felt, was in need of his company. The journey was no small proof of his affectionate nature; old age was approaching; he was corpulent, gouty, and accustomed to every comfort; and the war of the French Revolution was raging in the districts through which he had to pass. But he did not hesitate, and after skirting the belligerent armies in his chaise, arrived safely in England. After visiting Lord Sheffield he proceeded to Bath, to stay with his stepmother. The amazing little figure, now almost spherical, bowled along the Bath Road in the highest state of exhilaration. "I am always," he told his friend, "so much delighted and improved with this union of ease and motion, that, were not the expense enormous, I would travel every year some hundred miles, more especially in England." Mrs. Gibbon, a very old lady, but still full of vitality, worshipped her stepson, and the two spent ten days together, talking, almost always tête-à-tête, for ten hours a day. Then the historian went off to Althorpe, where he spent a happy morning with Lord Spencer, looking at early editions of Cicero. And so back to London. In London a little trouble arose. A protuberance in the lower part of his person, which, owing to years of characteristic *insouciance*, had grown to extraordinary proportions, required attention; an operation was necessary; but it went off

well, and there seemed to be no danger. Once more Mr. Gibbon dined out. Once more he was seen, in his accustomed attitude, with advanced forefinger, addressing the company, and rapping his snuff box at the close of each particularly pointed phrase. But illness came on again—nothing very serious. The great man lay in bed discussing how much longer he would live—he was fifty-six—ten years, twelve years, or perhaps twenty. He ate some chicken and drank three glasses of Madeira. Life seemed almost as charming as usual. Next morning, getting out of bed for a necessary moment, "Je suis plus adroit," he said with his odd smile to his French valet. Back in bed again, he muttered something more, a little incoherently, lay back among the pillows, dozed, half-woke, dozed again, and became unconscious—for ever.

THE NOBLEST MONUMENT OF ENGLISH PROSE

I have deliberately refrained from naming in my title the masterpiece to which my descriptive phrase applies, because I wish to leave no question of the one and only aspect of a rich and complex subject which I mean to treat. For the monument of English prose to be considered is the King James version of the Bible. Of its unique significance in the field of English letters there can be no doubt. Its phraseology has become part and parcel of our common tongue—bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh. Its rhythms and cadences, its turns of speech, its familiar imagery, its very words, are woven into the texture of our literature, prose and poetry alike. Yet it is of the Orient, we of the West; it is a translation, not an original; and it has reached us by way, not of one language only, but of three. What is it, then, in this translation, which has made it a factor of such power in the development of our speech? What are the qualities which have stamped indelibly its very phraseology upon the literary masterpieces of 300 years? What, in particular, is the nature of the long evolution through which the noble vehicle of a great and deeply significant literature clothed itself at last in English words? Those, and those alone, are the questions which I shall try in part to answer

Consider for a moment (to deal with the obvious first) our own familiar, everyday speech—the apt and telling turns of expression, the phrases of homely vigour or happy pregnancy which have become a part of our linguistic stock in trade. "Highways and hedges," "hip and thigh," "arose as one man," "lick the dust," "a thorn in the flesh," "a broken reed," "the root of all evil," "the nether millstone," "the sweat of his brow," "heap coals of fire," "a soft answer," "a word in season," "weighed and found wanting," "we are the people" —that is a list of Biblical phrases cited in a recent volume, and most of us could double it or treble it at will. The English of the Bible has a pithiness and raciness, a homely tang, a terse sententiousness, an idiomatic flavour which comes home to men's business and bosoms. And among the qualities which a saturation in the Bible has always lent to English style is a happiness of incidental phrase and a swift tellingness of diction which only a similar saturation in Shakespeare can approach in its effectiveness.

But the influence of the English of the Bible is deeper and more pervasive far than that. And it is another aspect of this influence of which I wish particularly to speak. For the Biblical style is characterized not merely by homely vigour and pithiness of phrase, but also by a singular nobility of diction and by a rhythmic quality which is, I think, unrivalled in its beauty. And I know no better way of reaching an understanding of the unique position which the King James verson of the Bible occupies as a monument of prose than an attempt to reach

the secret of its diction and its rhythms. And that, with no pretence of completeness, is what I mean to do.

I

It is not too much to say, I think, that the language of the English Bible owes its distinctive qualities, and that perhaps in no unequal measure, on the one hand to the vast desert spaces and wide skies of the hither Orient, and on the other to the open seas and rock-bound coasts of England. Nor do I mean that in the least as a mere figure of speech. For at the beginning of the long chain of development which makes the very language of the English Bible what it is are the men who, beside the rivers of Babylon and Egypt, or among the hills and pasture lands of Israel and Judah, or in the wide stillness of Arabia, brooded and wondered and dreamed, and left a language simple and sensuous and steeped in the picturesque imagery of what they saw and felt. At the end of this same chain of causes are the theatres of Shakespeare's London and the ships of the Elizabethan voyagers—of men whose language was as virile and as vivid as their lives. And between are the seventy at Alexandria and Jerome in his desert—Greece and Rome between Mesopotamia and England. How did the elements fuse?

Once more let me repeat, we are concerned with a *translation*. Now there are certain things which are notoriously untranslatable.

Not poppy nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou ow'dest yesterday.

Some of you will recall a striking passage in which Dr. Furness takes those lines and points out, word by word, the utter impossibility of reproducing their distinctive music or their subtle connotations in any other language without irreparable loss. The very essence of a piece of literature—its breath and finer spirit—is apt to evaporate in the passage from one language to another, so intimate is the union between the nicer shades of thought and feeling and the delicate, evanescent associations of words. But now we reach the first element in our analysis. For Hebrew was a supremely translatable tongue, and it was so, in large degree, because of certain qualities of its vocabulary, which concern us closely here.

I spoke a moment ago—borrowing the words from Milton's famous phrase about poetry—of the Hebrew vocabulary as "simple and sensuous." Let me be a little more explicit, and turn first to English for what my pedagogical friends would call an "apperceptive basis." Everybody knows that most of the words we use to-day to express intellectual, emotional, spiritual concepts had originally physical significance. "Wrong," for example, primarily implied something twisted; "implied" itself involves the idea of something folded within another thing—as "involve" (to use what chance supplies!) rests on the concept of something rolled or wrapped about. "Concept"

itself, so considered, goes back to the notion of seizing or grasping; to " consider," in turn, was at first to gaze attentively upon the stars; " attentively," again, rests ultimately upon the idea of physical stretching—and so one might go on *ad libitum*. But with us these vivid physical implications of the words we use have all become attenuated, they have faded out. We no longer are conscious of their primitive, more concrete meaning; we should be not a little checked and disconcerted in our thinking if we were. In Hebrew, on the other hand, the vocabulary was consciously pictorial and concrete in its character. That which distinguishes the Semitic languages from the Aryan, says Renan, is the fact that " this primitive union of sensation and idea persists—so that in each word one still hears the echo of the primitive sensation which determined the choice of the first makers of the language." The writers of the Old Testament—and to a less degree those of the New as well—thought and felt and spoke in images—in a vocabulary compact of nearly all th physical sensations that flesh is heir to. " Paul's words," said Luther, " are alive; they have hands and feet; if you cut them they bleed." He might have said that with no less fitness of the Hebrew words.

Now this characteristic of the Hebrew vocabulary carries certain consequences which are pertinent to this discussion. In the first place, it gave to the diction of Hebrew literature an incomparable vividness. There is a famous passage in *Diana of the Crossways* in which Meredith speaks of the art of

description: "The art of the pen," he says, "is to rouse the inward vision, instead of labouring with a Drop-scene brush, as if it were to the eye; because our flying minds cannot contain a protracted description. That is why the poets, *who spring imagination with a word or phrase*, paint lasting pictures." Well, to a degree unapproached, perhaps, unless it be in Shakespeare or in Dante, the Hebrew writers "spring imagination with a word or phrase." Their very words carry out Browning's curt injunction: "do the thing shall breed the thought." Instead of merely naming an emotion, they reproduce the physical sensation that attends it—the surging of blood to the face, the tingling of the nerves, the rising of the hair, the palsy of the tongue, the quickening of the breath.

"O God, thou art my God . . . *my soul thirsteth* for thee, *my flesh longeth* for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is"; "As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so *panteth* my soul after thee"; "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little *folding of the hands* to sleep"; "As the door *turneth upon his hinges*, so doth the slothful upon his bed"; "Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, *a shaking of the head* among the people"; "We walk in darkness, *we grope for the wall* like the blind"; "I am weary of my crying: *my throat is dried*: *mine eyes fail* while I wait for my God."

It would be easy to read such passages endlessly; these are enough to show to what degree the Biblical vocabulary is compact of the primal stuff of our common humanity—of its universal emotional,

sensory experiences. The meaning of the Hebrew words is "carried"—in Wordsworth's phrase—"alive into the heart."

Moreover, this same simple and sensuous quality shows itself in another way—in the inexpugnable racial tendency of the Hebrew mind to express not only emotions, but ideas, in apt and telling imagery. Poet and prophet and chronicler alike thought as well as felt in terms of what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, what they had looked upon and their hands handled. The large and simple and permanent objects and elements of life—the eternal hills, the treasures of the snow, rain coming down upon mown grass, winds and all weathers, the rock in the desert, still waters in pasture lands and the sea that roars and is troubled, sleep and the fleetingness of dreams—all the perennial, elemental processes of nature, all the changing yet abiding physiognomy of earth and sky were charged to their brooding eye with spiritual significance, and woven into the very texture of their speech.

"And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land"; "Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God; thy judgments are a great deep"; "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth"; "Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep"; "As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their

image"; "Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with his mother, my soul is with me like a weaned child"; "Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it"; "Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?" "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more."

Utter simplicity, limpid clearness, the vividness of direct, authentic vision—these are the salient qualities of the diction of the men who wrote the Bible.

Now let me return to what was said a few moments ago. The Hebrew of the Old Testament (and to a less degree the Greek of the New) is supremely translatable, and it is so largely because of just these salient characteristics of its diction—its simplicity, its clarity, its directness, and its universal and immediate appeal. And that brings us to another aspect of the subject. For it is the translation into English with which we have to do. And as regards possession of these same qualities, the English vocabulary, as it happens, can meet the Hebrew upon equal terms.

There are in the English vocabulary, as everybody knows, two chief elements—the one native, the other complexly foreign. And it is the fusion of these two which constitutes the unrivalled

flexibility and variety of our speech. To its native Saxon element it owes a homely vigour, a forthrightness and vividness and concreteness, an emotional appeal, in which it matches the Hebrew itself. To its foreign element—chiefly the Latin component, which will concern us in a moment—is due, among other things, a sonorousness, a stateliness, a richness of music, a capacity for delicate discrimination which makes it an instrument of almost endlessly varied stops. Now one element is predominant, now the other; more frequently there is an intimate fusion of the two. Every page of English literature, whether prose or poetry, illustrates the possibilities of infinite variety inherent in this fundamental character of English diction; but it is its bearing in the translation of the Bible which concerns us now, and to that I pass at once.

For reasons too complex and far-reaching for discussion here, the language at the period during which the Bible was being translated into English was in its most plastic stage. It was a time of intense living, of incomparable zest in life. England was literally, in Milton's words, "a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks." Without being too crassly figurative one may put the thing in Biblical phrase: "The winter was past, the rain was over and gone, and the time of the singing of birds had come." This is no place to linger on the glory of those spacious days. The one thing which I wish to emphasize is this: with the new quickening of every phase

of life, the language itself kept even pace. There was a fresh consciousness of its possibilities, a sovereign and masterful exploitation of its hitherto undreamed resources. For the Elizabethans dealt with their speech as they dealt with life—with an adventurous zest in exacting from it all it had to give. "The lady shall speak her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't," says Hamlet to the players—and to say its mind freely, to the top of its bent, this particular period proposed; and if the language cabined, cribbed, confined it—why, then, the language must expand! And expand it did, with palpable growing pains now and then, but with an ultimate gain in freshness, in vividness, in raciness, in flexibility which it has never wholly lost. And so far as their medium was concerned, the King James translators fell upon lucky days.

They had at their disposal, then, on its Saxon side, a vocabulary scarcely less concrete and vivid than that of the Hebrew itself. Here is a paragraph from a book printed a hundred years before Shakespeare began to write, but widely read in Shakespeare's day—Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*:

And as the king lay in his cabin in the ship, he fell in a slumbering, and dreamed a marvellous dream: him seemed that a dreadful dragon did drown much of his people, and he came flying out of the west, and his head was enamelled with azure, and his shoulders shone as gold, his belly like mails of a marvellous hue, his tail full of tatters, his feet full of fine sable,

and his claws like fine gold; and an hideous flame of fire flew out of his mouth, like as the land and water had flamed all of fire. After him seemed there came out of the orient a grimly boar all black in a cloud, and his paws as big as a post; he was rugged looking roughly, he was the foulest beast that ever man saw, he roared and romed so hideously that it were marvel to hear. Then the dreadful dragon advanced him, and came in the wind like a falcon, giving great strokes on the boar, and the boar hit him again with his grisly tusks that his breast was all bloody, and that the hot blood made all the sea red of his blood. Then the dragon flew away all on an height, and came down with such a swough, and smote the boar on the ridge, which was ten foot large from the head to the tail, and smote the boar all to powder, both flesh and bones, that it flittered all abroad on the sea.

There is no lack in that diction of vigour, of concreteness, of picturing power! And when the translators of the Bible came to their task, they found a medium ready to their hand:

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

Or take another passage from Malory, and one from the Bible again:

Ah, Launcelot, he said, thou were head of all christian knights; and now I dare say, said Sir Ector, thou Sir Launcelot, there thou liest, that thou were never matched of earthly knights' hand; and thou were the courtiest knight that ever bare shield; and thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse; and thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman and thou were the kindest man that ever strake with sword; and thou were the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights; and thou was the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest.

Now hear the other:

The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! . . . From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. . . . How are the mighty fallen in the midst of battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful,

passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

There is in the translation from the Hebrew a majestic rhythm, of which I shall speak later, and which the prose of Malory lacks; but the two agree in the simplicity and the directness of their diction. And those qualities of the native element of English have met and merged with similar, often identical, qualities of the original. For no less than the Hebrew, the native English is the language of the eye, the hand, the heart, and one of the supreme merits of the Jacobean translators is their sense of that fundamental fact. Let me choose three other brief passages to make still clearer what I mean:

Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death. . . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.

There are no nobler passages in English prose. And out of the 144 words that I have just read, only ten are not of native origin. And the far-reaching and pervasive influence of the King James version of the Bible upon English style is very largely due to this happy coincidence of qualities in two languages in other respects as far apart as the East is from the West.

But simplicity is not the only quality of the diction of the King James version. It has majesty and stateliness as well. And that lofty grandeur of the diction of the English Bible is due in large degree to still another remarkable convergence of kindred qualities in two otherwise alien tongues. For centuries the ear of English-speaking people had been attuned to the sonorous diction of the service of the Church—to the majestic Latin of its offices and of its hymns. And for sheer splendour of verbal music the Latin of the Church—if I may express my own opinion—has never been surpassed. Let me read a brief passage from the lines of Bernard of Cluny on which the familiar hymn " Jerusalem the Golden " is based:

Urbs Sion aurea, patria lactea, cive decora,
Omne cor obruis, omnibus obstruis et cor et ora.
Nescio, nescio, quae jubilatio, lux tibi qualis,
Quam socialia gaudia, gloria quam specialis . . . .
Urbs Sion inclyta, turris et edita littore tuto,
Te peto, te colo, te flagro, te volo, canto, saluto. . .

O bona patria, num tua gaudia teque videbo?
O bona patria, num tua praemia plena tenebo?
Pax ibi florida, pascua vivida, viva medulla,
Nulla molestia, nulla tragœdia, lacryma nulla.
O sacra potio, sacra refectio, pax animarum,
O pius, O bonus, O placidus sonus, hymnus earum.

Or listen to the clangor of this:

Mortis portis fractis, fortis
Fortior vim sustulit;
Et per crucem regen trucem
Infernorum perculit.
Lumen clarum tenebrarum
Sedibus resplenduit;
Dum salvare, recreare,
Quod creavit, voluit.

Or to the mellower music of this—from the original of the hymn we know as "Jesus, the very thought of thee":

Jesu, dulcis memoria
Dans vera cordis gaudia,
Sed super mel et omnia
Eius dulcis praesentia. . . .

Jesu, dulcedo cordium,
Fons vivus, lumen mentium,
Excedens omne gaudium,
Et omne desiderium. . . .

Mane nobiscum, Domine,
Et nos illustra lumine,
Pulsa noctis caligine
Mundum replens dulcedine.

I have read these because I want to make at least reasonably clear the sort of thing that had trained the ear, and had become through generations part and parcel of the subconscious possession of those who listened, even without understanding, to the service of the Church. And it was in the majestic Latin of the Vulgate that the Bible, in that service, for centuries was heard. And the sonorousness of the Latin, no less than the simplicity of the Hebrew, found in English its apt and adequate vehicle. For through its enormous Latin element the English vocabulary had become an instrument capable of scarcely less stately harmonies than Latin itself And so, in the King James Bible, we find the plangent organ music of passages like these:

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. . . . And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors

through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

In a word, the supreme qualities of two vocabularies—the Hebrew of the writers of the Bible, and the Latin of its most influential version—found their counterpart in English; and to this complex of correspondences is largely due the marvellous felicity of diction which has made the English Bible a potent factor in the ennobling of the English speech.

But the bare fact of the adaptability of the language is not enough in itself to account for the surpassing beauty of the diction of the King James version. All harmonies (to indulge in a platitude) are latent in the complex mechanism of an organ, but a master's hand is necessary to evoke them. And the existence of a rich and supple medium of expression is not alone enough to make a masterpiece—or even to preclude monstrosities. There is something else which must come into reckoning. What kept, for example, the Jacobean translators from perpetrating such

a prodigy of unbridled diction as Stanyhurst's attempt to render Virgil, printed only thirty years before? Here are a few lines of that ill-starred performance:

> And thus as he mused, with tears Venus heauye beblubberd
> Prest foorth in presence, and whimpring framed her errand.
> O God most pusiaunt, whose mighty auctoritye lasting
> Ruls gods, and mankind skeareth with thunderus humbling:
> What syn hath Aeneas, my brat, committed agaynst the? . . .

Here is another sample:

> For the unsauerye rakhel with collops bludred yfrancked,
> With chuffe chaffe wynesops lyke a gourd bourrachoe replennisht,
> His nodil in crossewise wresting downe droups to the growndward,
> In belche galp vometing with dead sleape snortye the collops,
> Raw with wyne soused, we doe pray toe supernal assemblye,
> Round with al embaying thee muffe maffe loller.

That is what became of the beauteous majesty of Virgil under one of the linguistic tendencies of the

day. What saved the translation of the Bible from similar disfigurement? Or what kept it from such ridiculous excess as marks the pages of half the fashionable, courtly writing of the period, as one finds it, for example, in a book whose very title is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the vogue: "A Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure Containing Many Pretie Histories by him set forth in Comely Colours and most Delightfully Discoursed"—in the very first story of which we are to see "a marvellous mirror of blessed matrimony, and a terrible type of beastly tyranny?" That painful cituation comes about, we are told, because "this Sinorix, glancing his gazing eyes on the blazing beauty of Camma, received so deep an impression of her perfection in his heart, that immediately he fixed his fancy upon her comely corps." Men were freely indulging in that amazing jargon while the translation of the Bible was under way. What conserved against such influences its unfailing dignity and exquisite felicity of word and phrase? The causes, I think, were chiefly two.

The one is, of course, the loftiness and beauty of the original itself, which tended, through its own compelling influence, to exercise a check upon linguistic eccentricities. But even the depth and beauty of the original, potent a factor as admittedly it was, is not sufficient to account for the freedom of the King James version from disfiguring elements. For there have been notoriously queer translations of this same beautiful original. The noble simplicity of the

twenty-third Psalm did not deter Simon Patrick, Lord Bishop of Chichester, who during the 1680's paraphrased both the Psalms and the Song of Songs, from the exercise of his own peculiar gifts. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still water"; that is the second verse as we have it in the King James version. And this is Patrick's paraphrase: "For as a good Shepherd leads his Sheep in the violent Heat to shady Places, where they may lie down and feed (not in parched, but) in fresh and green Pastures; and in the Evening leads them (not to muddy and troubled Waters, but) to pure and quiet streams: so hath he already made a fair and plentiful Provision for me; which I enjoy in Peace without any disturbance." Here, again, is one of the lyric cries of the Song of Songs, as the Jacobean translators rendered it: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love." And this is Simon Patrick's version of the same: "So I turned myself to those of my Neighbours and familiar Acquaintance, who were awakened by my cries to come and see what the matter was; and conjured them, as they would answer it to God, that if they met with my Beloved, they would let Him know—what shall I say?—what shall I desire you to tell Him? but that I do not enjoy myself, now that I want his Company nor can be well, till I recover his love again."—"Whither is fled the visionary gleam? Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" If ever the beauty of Israel was slain upon its high places it was when Simon Patrick

took pen in hand as an improver of the Bible! Even the Rheims version, on which the King James translators drew for some of their happiest renderings, was capable of such vagaries as "Give us today our supersubstantial bread," or "Beneficence and communication do not forget, for with such hosets God is promerited"; while for the great Jacobean phrase "the deep things of God" the Rhemish translators read "the *profundities* of God." Obviously even the influence of the great original was not sufficient to hold in check the eccentricities of individual translators. The reason for the transcendent merits of the prose diction of the King James version is found, in large measure, in another fact.

That fact is this. The "Authorized" Version represents a slow, almost impersonal, evolution. For it is, in reality, itself a revision, resting upon earlier versions, and these, in turn, depend in varying degrees upon each other, so that through the gradual exercise of something which approaches natural selection, there has come about, in both diction and phraseology, a true survival of the fittest. For the earliest vernacular version in English we must go back to Wycliffe and his followers, in Chaucer's day But the immediate development with which we are concerned begins with Tyndale, the first part of whose translation appeared in 1525, almost a century before the Jacobean version saw the light. Following Tyndale's translation, at intervals through the sixteenth century, came five others. In 1535 appeared Coverdale's Bible, a revision of Tyndale, with the help of the Swiss-German version of 1524-29, and also of

Luther's vivid and idiomatic rendering. Next came Matthew's Bible (edited, chiefly from Tyndale, by that John Rogers with whose martyrdom the New England Primer has made us all familiar), and then, in 1539, the Great Bible, revised by Coverdale from Matthew's Bible. In 1560 the Protestants exiled under Mary made at Geneva a version, known as the Geneva Bible, based more closely than the others on the original, but powerfully influenced still by the work of Tyndale and Coverdale. In 1568 was published the Bishops' Bible—itself a revision of the Great Bible, with the aid of the Geneva version—which, in turn, formed the ostensible basis of the King James version. And entering the current to a slight degree is also the Rhemish Bible, the English translation made by the Romanists during the 'eighties of the sixteenth century.

The style of the King James version then is, as I have said, an evolution. It rests in the first instance upon the translation of John Tyndale; but it is, in the end, the resultant of a long selective process, of a winnowing of words that lasted almost a century. Tyndale's own diction was singularly simple, energetic, nervous, and yet restrained; the closing years of the sixteenth century were, as we have seen, a period of vivid and fresh and plastic speech; and the long process of impersonal selection, through the influence of version upon version, served (to use Dante's phrase) as "a sieve for noble words." And through the influence of the diction which emerged at last from that complex interplay of varied forces, the current of our speech has been enriched by

Words that have drawn transcendent meanings up
From the best passion of all by-gone time,
Steeped through with tears of triumph and remorse,
Sweet with all sainthood, cleansed in martyr-fires.

Those lines of Lowell's are literally true. And they lead us at once, with their recognition of an undertone of profound emotion which pervades the history, to another aspect of the subject. For the prose of the Jacobean version is magnificently rhythmic, and its rhythms represent an evolution too.

II

The language of elevated thought or feeling is always rhythmic. Strong feeling of whatever sort, that is, imposes upon speech a rhythmic beat. Even you and I, whose ordinary daily talk maintains its slow or hurried, nervous or phlegmatic staccato or legato, but always pedestrian gait—even you and I, under stress of compelling emotion, find our speech taking on not only deeper colour, but a more or less measured and inevitable beat. That rhythm is not the rhythm of verse; it is infinitely more varied, less susceptible of formulation, ebbing and flowing—sometimes even surging, pulsing, throbbing—with the systole and diastole of the emotion, controlled or unrestrained, which gives it birth. And it is that

heightening of rhythmic quality, whenever thought is deeply tinged with feeling, that characterizes elevated, as over against purely expository, prose.

Now the Biblical literature, to an almost unrivalled degree, is profoundly tinged with feeling. Racial bent, no less than the drama of their history, led the writers of the Bible to a strongly felt rather than closely reasoned envisagement of life. Caught as their little country was between the upper and nether millstones of the great empires to the north and to the south, mere puppets as they were between the fell incensed points of mighty opposites, the Jewish race faced a terrible enigma, and the great literature of the Exile is little else than a passionate attempt to solve what seemed to be an inexplicable riddle—the mysterious ways of God with men. The Old Testament writings, in the form in which we have them now, date in large measure from that period of stress, and the tragic problem of continued national existence merged—once more in the minds of prophets and poets and chroniclers alike—with the no less tragic spiritual problem of God's enigmatic dealings with his chosen race. No people, perhaps, so deeply felt the burthen of the mystery, the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world, as did the Jews; and no literature, I think, is so pervaded with profound and passionate emotion as the writings of the Old and the New Testament.

Nor is that all. There is again a strange and significant parallel. For the century during which the English translation slowly grew, was also a period of great spiritual stress. Tyndale's heroic life ended

in martyrdom; John Rogers died at the stake; none of the earlier translators counted their lives dear unto themselves. [Translation and original alike came through the furnace, and those who first wrote and those who last rendered were inspired by an intensity of feeling which found inevitable expression, among other ways, in the very cadences of their speech.] For the prose of the King James version is not rhythmic without cause. We are dealing, as in the matter of the diction, with a development, and the very mould in which the familiar words are cast—the actual rhythms of the majestic English prose which we have just read—are what they are through influences active for centuries before the Jacobean translators were born.

One of those influences lay in the very nature of Hebrew poetry itself, the formative principle of which, as everybody knows, was what has been called "the rhythm of meaning"—a parallelism of thought, as well as of form, which was susceptible of infinite variety. "'The rapid stroke as of alternate wings,'" says Dean Stanley, in a well-known passage, "'the heaving and sinking as of the troubled heart,' which have been beautifully described as the essence of the parallel structure of Hebrew verse, are exactly suited for the endless play of human feeling, and for the understanding of every age and nation." And again, as in the case of the diction, we have to observe a peculiar circumstance. Poetic rhythms, as a rule, are incorrigibly untranslatable; the luckless fate of innumerable "translations in the metres of the original" bears eloquent witness to that mournful

truth. But here was a rhythm dependent upon an inner impulse rather than upon external rule—ebbing and flowing, rising and falling with the fluctuations of thought or mood, and carrying, through its powerful beat, the impelling emotion into the reader's mind, to stir in turn the springs of rhythm there. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century translators of the Bible were happily untroubled by pedantic theories of the technique of Hebrew verse; what they felt was this deep inner rhythm—this alternating surge of thought or feeling; and untrammelled by any attempt to reproduce with technical exactness its outward form, they responded to its inner spirit in a prose whose rhythms, so moulded, have a flexibility, a stateliness, a grand freedom, which even the original does not always share. Sometimes it is a majestic march of rhythms like that of an army with banners:

Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.

Or again, it is precisely that heaving and sinking as of the troubled heart of which Dean Stanley speaks:

Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck? For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest, with kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves; or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light. There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there; and the servant is free from his master.

Now it is in the exquisite swell of a rhythm to its climax:

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.

Again it is the measured beat of passion in restraint, as in that passage which Professor Saintsbury once singled out as the best example known to him of "absolutely perfect English prose"—a passage which I have already read in part for the matchless beauty of its diction:

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters

cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

Through every one of those passages runs the balanced structure of the Hebrew verse; but it has translated itself into a marvellously rich and varied rhythmic prose which through three centuries—alas! that one should have to add, less potently to-day—has attuned to its harmonies the English ear, and influenced the noblest English style.

I may not speak at length, as I wish I might, of the co-operant influence of the majestic rhythms of Jerome's Latin in the Vulgate. As in the case of the diction, so here again there has been an extraordinary interweaving of disparate strands, and the very order of the English words in some of those passages in the King James version which are most stately in their going, is what it is because of the stamp impressed upon the Vulgate by the powerful personality of St. Jerome. It would not be impossible to point out sentences in the King James version in which converge, in the present order of the English words, the turns of expression, under strong emotion, of four men living centuries apart—of some nameless writer of the Exile, and of St. Jerome, John Tyndale, and Miles Coverdale. And you and I echo their dead voices as we read. For not only is the message of the Bible the most profoundly human that was ever penned, but its very form, in the soberest, least sentimental sense, is compact of " the mighty hopes "—and fears—" that make us men."

I may only mention the way in which, from version to version through the century in which the King James version grew, its prose acquired a deepeningly rhythmic quality. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." Compare the cadence of that sentence with the rendering of Wycliffe: "Thei schulen no more hungre nether thirst." The change in the order, and the addition of the two words "any more"—"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more"—have touched Wycliffe's words with new and imperishable beauty. The Bishops' Bible reads: "He is suche a man as hath good experience of sorowes and infirmities." The Genevan version changed it to "a man ful of sorows and hath experience of infirmities." It was the King James translators who took the final step to the grave beauty of the perfect wording that we know: "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." More than to any one else it was to John Tyndale that the noblest qualities of the Biblical prose are due. Yet here is even Tyndale's rendering of the opening verses of Genesis: "In the begynnynge God created heaven and erth. The erth was voyde and emptie, and darcknesse was upon the depe, and the spirite of god moved upon the water." That is substantially the version that we know. Yet it lacks the rhythmic grandeur, unobtrusive but pervasive, which the Jacobean rendering has: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the waters." "Come unto me, all

ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," owes as much to its matchless loveliness of form as it does to the spiritual beauty of its content. If one doubt that, one need only listen to its earliest English rendering: "Alle ye that traueilen, and ben chargid, come to me, and Y schal fulfille you."

One could go on for ever; that is enough, I think, to show that the mould in which the well-known phraseology is cast was no happy accident, but the outcome of movements and tendencies rooted deep in racial and personal experience. And in the response of the last three centuries to that great utterance, which has become, with Milton, the "organ-voice of England," deep has answered to deep again.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY

In the first place a contemporary can scarcely fail to be struck by the fact that two critics at the same table at the same moment will pronounce completely different opinions about the same book. Here, on the right, it is declared a masterpiece of English prose; on the left, simultaneously, a mere mass of waste-paper which, if the fire could survive it, should be thrown upon the flames. Yet both critics are in agreement about Milton and about Keats. They display an exquisite sensibility and have undoubtedly a genuine enthusiasm. It is only when they discuss the work of contemporary writers that they inevitably come to blows. The book in question, which is at once a lasting contribution to English literature and a mere farrago of pretentious mediocrity, was published about two months ago. That is the explanation; that is why they differ.

The explanation is a strange one. It is equally disconcerting to the reader who wishes to take his bearings in the chaos of contemporary literature and to the writer who has a natural desire to know whether his own work, produced with infinite pains and in almost utter darkness, is likely to burn for ever among the fixed luminaries of English letters or, on the contrary, to put out the fire. But if we identify ourselves with the reader and explore his dilemma first, our bewilderment is short-lived enough.

The same thing has happened so often before. We have heard the doctors disagreeing about the new and agreeing about the old twice a year on the average, in spring and autumn, ever since Robert Elsmere, or was it Stephen Phillips, somehow pervaded the atmosphere, and there was the same disagreement among grown-up people about these books too. It would be much more marvellous, and indeed much more upsetting, if, for a wonder, both gentlemen agreed, pronounced Blank's book an undoubted masterpiece, and thus faced us with the necessity of deciding whether we should back their judgement to the extent of ten and six pence. Both are critics of reputation: the opinions tumbled out so spontaneously here will be starched and stiffened into columns of sober prose which will uphold the dignity of letters in England and America.

It must be some innate cynicism, then, some ungenerous distrust of contemporary genius, which determines us automatically as the talk goes on that, were they to agree—which they show no signs of doing—half a guinea is altogether too large a sum to squander upon contemporary enthusiasms, and the case will be met quite adequately by a card to the library. Still the question remains, and let us put it boldly to the critics themselves. Is there no guidance nowadays for a reader who yields to none in reverence for the dead, but is tormented by the suspicion that reverence for the dead is vitally connected with understanding of the living? After a rapid survey both critics are agreed that there is unfortunately no such person.

judgement worth where new books are concerned? Certainly not ten and six pence. And from the stores of their experience they proceed to bring forth terrible examples of past blunders; crimes of criticism which, if they had been committed against the dead and not against the living, would have lost them their jobs and imperilled their reputations. The only advice they can offer is to respect one's own instincts, to follow them fearlessly and, rather than submit them to the control of any critic or reviewer alive, to check them by reading and reading again the masterpieces of the past.

Thanking them humbly, we cannot help reflecting that it was not always so. Once upon a time, we must believe, there was a rule, a discipline, which controlled the great republic of readers in a way which is now unknown. That is not to say that the great critic—the Dryden, the Johnson, the Coleridge, the Arnold—was an impeccable judge of contemporary work, whose verdicts stamped the book indelibly and saved the reader the trouble of reckoning the value for himself. The mistakes of these great men about their own contemporaries are too notorious to be worth recording. But the mere fact of their existence had a centralising influence. That alone, it is not fantastic to suppose, would have controlled the disagreements of the dinner-table and given to random chatter about some book just out an authority now entirely to seek. The diverse schools would have debated as hotly as ever, but at the back of every reader's mind would have been the consciousness that there was at least one man who kept the

main principles of literature closely in view: who, if you had taken to him some eccentricity of the moment, would have brought it into touch with permanence and tethered it by his own authority in the contrary blasts of praise and blame.* But when it comes to the making of a critic, nature must be generous and society ripe. The scattered dinner-tables of the modern world, the chase and eddy of the various currents which compose the society of our time, could only be dominated by a giant of fabulous dimensions. And where is even the very tall man whom we have the right to expect? Reviewers we have but no critic; a million competent and incorruptible policemen but no judge. Men of taste and learning and ability are for ever lecturing the young and celebrating the dead. But the too frequent result of their able and industrious pens is a desiccation of the living tissues of literature into a network of little bones. Nowhere shall we find the

* How violent these are two quotations will show. "It [*Told by an Idiot*] should be read as the *Tempest* should be read, and as *Gulliver's Travels* should be read, for if Miss Macaulay's poetic gift happens to be less sublime than those of the author of the *Tempest*, and if her irony happens to be less tremendous than that of the author of *Gulliver's Travels*, her justice and wisdom are no less noble than theirs."—*The Daily News*.

The next day we read: "For the rest one can only say that if Mr. Eliot had been pleased to write in demotic English *The Waste Land* might not have been, as it just is to all but anthropologists and literati, so much waste-paper."—*The Manchester Guardian*.

downright vigour of a Dryden, or Keats with his fine and natural bearing, his profound insight and sanity, or Flaubert and the tremendous power of his fanaticism, or Coleridge, above all, brewing in his head the whole of poetry and letting issue now and then one of those profound general statements which are caught up by the mind when hot with the friction of reading as if they were of the soul of the book itself.

And to all this, too, the critics generously agree. A great critic, they say, is the rarest of beings. But should one miraculously appear, how should we maintain him, on what should we feed him? Great critics, if they are not themselves great poets, are bred from the profusion of the age. There is some great man to be vindicated, some school to be founded or destroyed. But our age is meagre to the verge of destitution. There is no name which dominates the rest. There is no master in whose workshop the young are proud to serve apprenticeship. Mr. Hardy has long since withdrawn from the arena, and there is something exotic about the genius of Mr. Conrad which makes him not so much an influence as an idol, honoured and admired, but aloof and apart. As for the rest, though they are many and vigorous and in the full flood of creative activity, there is none whose influence can seriously affect his contemporaries, or penetrate beyond our day to that not very distant future which it pleases us to call immortality. If we make a century our test, and ask how much of the work produced in these days in England will be in existence then, we shall have to answer not merely that we cannot agree upon

the same book, but that we are more than doubtful whether such a book there is. It is an age of fragments. A few stanzas, a few pages, a chapter here and there, the beginning of this novel, the end of that, are equal to the best of any age or author. But can we go to posterity with a sheaf of loose pages, or ask the readers of those days, with the whole of literature before them, to sift our enormous rubbish heaps for our tiny pearls? Such are the questions which the critics might lawfully put to their companions at table, the novelists and poets.

At first the weight of pessimism seems sufficient to bear down all opposition. Yes, it is a lean age, we repeat, with much to justify its poverty; but, frankly, if we pit one century against another the comparison seems overwhelmingly against us. *Waverley*, *The Excursion*, *Kubla Khan*, *Don Juan*, *Hazlitt's Essays*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Hyperion*, and *Prometheus Unbound* were all published between 1800 and 1821. Our century has not lacked industry; but if we ask for masterpieces it appears on the face of it that the pessimists are right. It seems as if an age of genius must be succeeded by an age of endeavour; riot and extravagance by cleanliness and hard work. All honour, of course, to those who have sacrificed their immortality to set the house in order. But if we ask for masterpieces, where are we to look? A little poetry, we may feel sure, will survive; a few poems by Mr. Yeats, by Mr Davies, by Mr. De la Mare. Mr. Lawrence, of course, has moments of greatness, but hours of something very different. Mr. Beerbohm, in his way, is [illegible] not

a big way. Passages in *Far Away* and *Long Ago* will undoubtedly go to posterity entire. *Ulysses* was a memorable catastrophe—immense in daring, terrific in disaster. And so, picking and choosing, we select now this, now that, hold it up for display, hear it defended or derided, and finally have to meet the objection that even so we are only agreeing with the critics that it is an age incapable of sustained effort, littered with fragments, and not seriously to be compared with the age that went before.

But it is just when opinions universally prevail and we have added lip service to their authority that we become sometimes most keenly conscious that we do not believe a word that we are saying. It is a barren and exhausted age, we repeat; we must look back with envy to the past. Meanwhile it is one of the first fine days of spring. Life is not altogether lacking in colour. The telephone, which interrupts the most serious conversations and cuts short the most weighty observations, has a romance of its own. And the random talk of people who have no chance of immortality and thus can speak their minds out has a setting, often, of lights, streets, houses, human beings, beautiful or grotesque, which will weave itself into the moment for ever. But this is life; the talk is about literature. We must try to disentangle the two, and justify the rash revolt of optimism against the superior plausibility, the finer distinction, of pessimism.

Our optimism, then, is largely instinctive. It springs from the fine day and the wine and the talk; it springs from the fact that when life

throws up such treasures daily, daily suggests more than the most voluble can express, much though we admire the dead, we perfer life as it is. There is something about the present which we would not exchange, though we were offered a choice of all past ages to live in. And modern literature, with all its imperfections, has the same hold on us and the same fascination. It is like a relation whom we snub and scarify daily, but, after all, cannot do without. It has the same endearing quality of being that which we are, that which we have made, that in which we live, instead of being something, however august, alien to ourselves and beheld from the outside. Nor has any generation more need than ours to cherish its contemporaries. We are sharply cut off from our predecessors. A shift in the scale—the sudden slip of masses held in position for ages—has shaken the fabric from top to bottom, alienated us from the past and made us perhaps too vividly conscious of the present. Every day we find ourselves doing, saying, or thinking things that would have been impossible to our fathers. And we feel the differences which have not been noted far more keenly than the resemblances which have been very perfectly expressed. New books lure us to read them partly in the hope that they will reflect this re-arrangement of our attitude—these scenes, thoughts, and apparently fortuitous groupings of incongruous things which impinge upon us with so keen a sense of novelty—and, as literature does, give it back into our keeping, whole and comprehended. Here indeed there is every reason for optimism. No a

rich than ours in writers determined to give expression to the differences which separate them from the past and not to the resemblances which connect them with it. It would be invidious to mention names, but the most casual reader dipping into poetry, into fiction, into biography can hardly fail to be impressed by the courage, the sincerity, in a word, by the widespread originality of our time. But our exhilaration is strangely curtailed. Book after book leaves us with the same sense of promise unachieved, of intellectual poverty, of brilliance which has been snatched from life but not transmuted into literature. Much of what is best in contemporary work has the appearance of being noted under pressure, taken down in a bleak shorthand which preserves with astonishing brilliance the movements and expressions of figures as they pass across the screen. But the flash is soon over, and there remains with us a profound dissatisfaction. The irritation is as acute as the pleasure was intense.

After all, then, we are back at the beginning, vacillating from extreme to extreme, at one moment enthusiastic, at the next pessimistic, unable to come to any conclusion about our contemporaries. We have asked the critics to help us, but they had deprecated the task. Now, then, is the time to accept their advice and correct these extremes by consulting the masterpieces of the past. We feel ourselves indeed driven to them, impelled not by calm judgement but by some imperious need to anchor our instability upon their security. But, honestly, the shock of the comparison between past

and present is at first disconcerting. Undoubtedly there is a dullness in great books. There is an unabashed tranquillity in page after page of Wordsworth and Scott and Miss Austen which is sedative to the verge of somnolence. Opportunities occur and they neglect them. Shades and subtleties accumulate and they ignore them. They seem deliberately to refuse to gratify those senses which are stimulated so briskly by the moderns; the senses of sight, of sound, of touch—above all, the sense of the human being, his depth and the variety of his perceptions, his complexity, his confusion, his self, in short. There is little of all this in the works of Wordsworth and Scott and Jane Austen. From what, then, arises that sense of security which gradually, delightfully, and completely overcomes us? It is the power of their belief—their conviction—that imposes itself upon us. In Wordsworth, the philosophic poet, this is obvious enough. But it is equally true of the careless Scott, who scribbled masterpieces to build castles before breakfast, and of the modest maiden lady who wrote furtively and quietly simply to give pleasure. In both there is the same natural conviction that life is of a certain quality. They have their judgement of conduct. They know the relations of human beings towards each other and towards the universe. Neither of them probably has a word to say about the matter outright, but everything depends on it. Only believe, we find ourselves saying, and all the rest will come of itself. Only believe, to take a very simple instance which the recent publication of *The Watsons*

brings to mind, that a nice girl will instinctively try to soothe the feelings of a boy who has been snubbed at a dance, and then, if you believe it implicitly and unquestioningly, you will not only make people a hundred years later feel the same thing, but you will make them feel it as literature. For certainty of that kind is the condition which makes it possible to write. To believe that your impressions hold good for others is to be released from the cramp and confinement of personality. It is to be free, as Scott was free, to explore with a vigour which still holds us spell-bound the whole world of adventure and romance. It is also the first step in that mysterious process in which Jane Austen was so great an adept. The little grain of experience once selected, believed in, and set outside herself, could be put precisely in its place, and she was then free to make it, by a process which never yields its secrets to the analyst, into that complete statement which is literature.

So then our contemporaries afflict us because they have ceased to believe. The most sincere of them will only tell us what it is that happens to himself. They cannot make a world, because they are not free of other human beings. They cannot tell stories because they do not believe that stories are true. They cannot generalise. They depend on their senses and emotions, whose testimony is trustworthy, rather than on their intellects whose message is obscure. And they have perforce to deny themselves the use of some of the most powerful and some of the most exquisite of the weapons of their

craft. With the whole wealth of the English language at the back of them, they timidly pass about from hand to hand and book to book only the meanest copper coins. Set down at a fresh angle of the eternal prospect they can only whip out their note-books and record with agonised intensity the flying gleams, which light on what? and the transitory splendours, which may, perhaps, compose nothing whatever. But here the critics interpose, and with some show of justice.

If this description holds good, they say, and is not, as it may well be, entirely dependent upon our position at the table and certain purely personal relationships to mustard pots and flower vases, then the risks of judging contemporary work are greater than ever before. There is every excuse for them if they are wide of the mark; and no doubt it would be better to retreat, as Matthew Arnold advised, from the burning ground of the present to the safe tranquillity of the past. "We enter on burning ground," wrote Matthew Arnold, "as we approach the poetry of times so near to us, poetry like that of Byron, Shelley, and Wordsworth, of which the estimates are so often not only personal, but personal with passion," and this, they remind us, was written in the year 1880. Beware, they say, of putting under the microscope one inch of a ribbon which runs many miles; things sort themselves out if you wait; moderation, and a study of the classics are to be recommended. Moreover, life is short; the Byron centenary is at hand; and the burning question of the moment is, did he, or did he not,

marry his sister? To sum up, then—if indeed any conclusion is possible when everybody is talking at once and it is time to be going—it seems that it would be wise for the writers of the present to renounce the hope of creating masterpieces. Their poems, plays, biographies, novels are not books but notebooks, and Time, like a good schoolmaster, will take them in his hands, point to their blots and scrawls and erasions, and tear them across; but he will not throw them into the waste-paper basket. He will keep them because other students will find them very useful. It is from the notebooks of the present that the masterpieces of the future are made. Literature, as the critics were saying just now, has lasted long, has undergone many changes, and it is only a short sight and a parochial mind that will exaggerate the importance of the squalls, however they may agitate the little boats now tossing out at sea. The storm and the drenching are on the surface; continuity and calm are in the depths.

As for the critics whose task it is to pass judgement upon the books of the moment, whose work, let us admit, is difficult, dangerous, and often distasteful, let us ask them to be generous of encouragement, but sparing of those wreaths and coronets which are so apt to get awry, and fade, and make the wearers, in six months' time, look a little ridiculous. Let them take a wider, a less personal view of modern literature, and look indeed upon the writers as if they were engaged upon some vast building, which being built by common effort, the separate workmen may well remain anonymous.

Let them slam the door upon the cosy company where sugar is cheap and butter plentiful, give over, for a time at least, the discussion of that fascinating topic—whether Byron married his sister—and, withdrawing, perhaps, a hand's breadth from the table where we sit chattering, say something interesting about literature itself. Let us buttonhole them as they leave, and recall to their memory that gaunt aristocrat, Lady Hester Stanhope, who kept a milk-white horse in her stable in readiness for the Messiah and was for ever scanning the mountain tops, impatiently but with confidence, for signs of his approach, and ask them to follow her example; scan the horizon; see the past in relation to the future; and so prepare the way for masterpieces to come.

NOTES ON AN ELIZABETHAN PLAY

There are, it must be admitted, some highly formidable tracts in English literature, and chief among them that jungle, forest, and wilderness which is the Elizabethan drama. For many reasons, not here to be examined, Shakespeare stands out, Shakespeare who has had the light on him from his day to ours, Shakespeare who towers highest when looked at from the level of his own contemporaries. But the plays of the lesser Elizabethans—Greene, Dekker, Peele, Chapman, Beaumont and Fletcher—to adventure into that wilderness is for the ordinary reader an ordeal, an upsetting experience which plies him with questions, harries him with doubts, alternately delights and vexes him with pleasures and pains. For we are apt to forget, reading, as we tend to do, only the masterpieces of a bygone age, how great a power the body of a literature possesses to impose itself: how it will not suffer itself to be read passively, but takes us and reads us; flouts our preconceptions; questions principles which we had got into the habit of taking for granted, and, in fact, splits us into two parts as we read, making us, even as we enjoy, yield our ground or stick to our guns.

At the outset in reading an Elizabethan play we are overcome by the extraordinary discrepancy between the Elizabethan view of reality and our own.

The reality to which we have grown accustomed is, speaking roughly, based upon the life and death of some knight called Smith, who succeeded his father in the family business of pitwood importers, timber merchants and coal exporters, was well known in political, temperance, and church circles, did much for the poor of Liverpool, and died last Wednesday of pneumonia while on a visit to his son at Muswell Hill. That is the world we know. That is the reality which our poets and novelists have to expound and illuminate. Then we open the first Elizabethan play that comes to hand and read how

I once did see
In my young travels through Armenia
An angry unicorn in his full career
Charge with too swift a foot a jeweller
That watch'd him for the treasure of his brow,
And ere he could get shelter of a tree
Nail him with his rich antlers to the earth.

Where is Smith, we ask, where is Liverpool? And the groves of Elizabethan drama echo "Where?" Exquisite is the delight, sublime the relief of being set free to wander in the land of the unicorn and the jeweller among dukes and grandees, Gonzaloes and Bellimperias, who spend their lives in murder and intrigue, dress up as men if they are women, as women if they are men, see ghosts, run mad, and die in the greatest profusion on the slightest provocation, uttering as they fall imprecations of superb vigour or elegies of the wildest despair. But soon

the low, the relentless voice, which, if we wish to identify it, we must suppose typical of a reader fed on modern English literature, and French and Russian, asks why, then, with all this to stimulate and enchant, these old plays are for long stretches of time so intolerably dull? Is it not that literature, if it is to keep us on the alert through five acts or thirty-two chapters, must somehow be based on Smith, have one toe touching Liverpool, take off into whatever heights it pleases from reality? We are not so purblind as to suppose that a man because his name is Smith and he lives at Liverpool is therefore "real." We know indeed that this reality is a chameleon quality, the fantastic becoming as we grow used to it often the closest to the truth, the sober the furthest from it, and nothing proving a writer's greatness more than his capacity to consolidate his scene by the use of what, until he touched them, seemed wisps of cloud and threads of gossamer. Our contention merely is that there is a station, somewhere in mid-air, whence Smith and Liverpool can be seen to the best advantage; that the great artist is the man who knows where to place himself above the shifting scenery; that while he never loses sight of Liverpool he never sees it in the wrong perspective. The Elizabethans bore us, then, because their Smiths are all changed to dukes, their Liverpools to fabulous islands and palaces in Genoa. Instead of keeping a proper poise above life they soar miles into the empyrean, where nothing is visible for long hours at a time but clouds at their revelry, and a cloud landscape is not ultimately satisfactory to

human eyes. The Elizabethans bore us because they suffocate our imaginations rather than set them to work.

Still, though potent enough, the boredom of an Elizabethan play is of a different quality altogether from the boredom which a nineteenth-century play, a Tennyson or a Henry Taylor play, inflicts. The riot of images, the violent volubility of language, all that cloys and satiates in the Elizabethans yet appears to be drawn up with a roar as a feeble fire is sucked up by a newspaper. There is, even in the worst, an intermittent bawling vigour which gives us the sense in our quiet arm-chairs of ostlers and orange-girls catching up the lines, flinging them back, hissing or stamping applause. But the deliberate drama of the Victorian age is evidently written in a study. It has for audience ticking clocks and rows of classics bound in half morocco. There is no stamping, no applause. It does not, as, with all its faults, the Elizabethan audience did, leaven the mass with fire. Rhetorical and bombastic, the lines are flung and hurried into existence and reach the same impromptu felicities, have the same lip-moulded profusion and unexpectedness, which speech sometimes achieves, but seldom in our day the deliberate, solitary pen. Indeed, half the work of the dramatists, one feels, was done in the Elizabethan [illegible] by the public.

Against that, however, i[illegible] set the fact that the influence of the publi[illegible]n many respects detestable. To its door we must lay the greatest in-fliction that Elizabethan drama puts upon us—the

plot; the incessant, improbable, almost unintelligible convolutions which presumably gratified the spirit of an excitable and unlettered public actually in the playhouse, but only confuse and fatigue a reader with the book before him. Undoubtedly something must happen; undoubtedly a play where nothing happens is an impossibility. But we have a right to demand (since the Greeks have proved that it is perfectly possible) that what happens shall have an end in view. It shall agitate great emotions; bring into existence memorable scenes; stir the actors to say what could not be said without this stimulus. Nobody can fail to remember the plot of the *Antigone*, because what happens is so closely bound up with the emotions of the actors that we remember the people and the plot at one and the same time. But who can tell us what happens in the *White Devil*, or the *Maid's Tragedy*, except by remembering the story apart from the emotions which it has aroused? As for the lesser Elizabethans, like Greene and Kyd, the complexities of their plots are so great, and the violence which those plots demand so terrific, that the actors themselves are obliterated and emotions which, according to our convention at least, deserve the most careful investigation, the most delicate analysis, are clean sponged off the slate. And the result is inevitable. Outside Shakespeare, and perhaps Ben J[illegible], there are no characters in Elizabethan dra[illegible]ly violences whom we know so little tha[illegible]an scarcely care what becomes of them. Ta[illegible]ny hero or heroine in those early plays—Bellimperia in the *Spanish Tragedy*

will serve as well as another—and can we honestly say that we care a jot for the unfortunate lady who runs the whole gamut of human misery to kill herself in the end? No more than for an animated broomstick, we must reply, and in a work dealing with men and women the prevalence of broomsticks is a drawback. But the *Spanish Tragedy* is admittedly a crude forerunner, chiefly valuable because such primitive efforts lay bare the formidable framework which greater dramatists could modify, but had to use. Ford, it is claimed, is of the school of Stendhal and of Flaubert; Ford is a psychologist. Ford is an analyst. "This man," says Mr. Havelock Ellis, "writes of women not as a dramatist nor as a lover, but as one who has searched intimately and felt with instinctive sympathy the fibres of their hearts."

The play—*'Tis pity she's a Whore*—upon which this judgement is chiefly based shows us the whole nature of Annabella spun from pole to pole in a series of tremendous vicissitudes. First, her brother tells her that he loves her: next she confesses her love for him; next finds herself with child by him; next forces herself to marry Soranzo; next is discovered; next repents; finally is killed, and it is her lover and brother who kills her. To trace the trail of feelings which such crises and calamities might be expected to breed in a woman of ordinary sensibility might have filled volumes. A dramatist, of course, has no voulmes to fill. He is forced to contract. Even so, he can illumine; he can reveal enough for us to guess the rest. But what is it that

we know without using microscopes and splitting hairs about the character of Annabella? Gropingly we make out that she is a spirited girl, with her defiance of her husband when he abuses her, her snatches of Italian song, her ready wit, her simple glad love-making. But of character as we understand the word there is no trace. We do not know how she reaches her conclusions, only that she has reached them. Nobody describes her. She is always at the height of her passion, never at its approach. Compare her with Anna Karenina. The Russian woman is flesh and blood, nerves and temperament, has heart, brain, body and mind where the English girl is flat and crude as a face painted on a playing card; she is without depth, without range, without intricacy. But as we say this we know that we have missed something. We have let the meaning of the play slip through our hands. We have ignored the emotion which has been accumulating because it has accumulated in places where we have not expected to find it. We have been comparing the play with prose, and the play, after all, is poetry.

The play is poetry, we say, and the novel prose. Let us attempt to obliterate detail, and place the two before us side by side, feeling, so far as we can, the angles and edges of each, recalling each, so far as we are able, as a whole. Then, at once, the prime differences emerge; the long leisurely accumulated novel; the little contracted play; the emotion all split up, dissipated and then woven together, slowly and gradually massed into a whole, in the novel; the emotion concentrated, generalised, heightened in the

play. What moments of intensity, what phrases of astonishing beauty the play shot at us!

> O, my lords,
> I but deceived your eyes with antic gesture,
> When one news straight came huddling on another
> Of death! and death! and death! still I danced forward.

or

> You have oft for these two lips
> Neglected cassia or the natural sweets
> Of the spring-violet: they are not yet much wither'd.

With all her reality, Anna Karenina could never say

> "You have oft for these two lips
> Neglected cassia."

Some of the most profound of human emotions are therefore beyond her reach. The extremes of passion are not for the novelist; the perfect marriages of sense and sound are not for him; he must tame his swiftness to sluggardry; keep his eyes on the ground, not on the sky: suggest by description, not reveal by illumination. Instead of singing

> Lay a garland on my hearse
> Of the dismal yew;
> Maidens, willow branches bear;
> Say I died true,

he must enumerate the chrysanthemums fading on the grave and the undertakers' men snuffling past in their four-wheelers. How then can we compare this lumbering and lagging art with poetry? Granted all the little dexterities by which the novelists makes us know the individual and recognise the real, the dramatist goes beyond the single and the separate, shows us not Annabella in love, but love itself; not Anna Karenina throwing herself under the train, but ruin and death and the

> . . .soul, like a ship in a balck'storm,
> . . . driven, I know not whither.

So with pardonable impatience we might exclaim as we shut our Elizabethan play. But what then is the exclamation with which we close *War and Peace?* Not one of disappointment; we are not left lamenting the superficiality, upbraiding the triviality of the novelist's art. Rather we are made more than ever aware of the inexhaustible richness of human sensibility. Here, in the play, we recognise the general; here, in the novel, the particular. Here we gather all our energies into a bunch and spring. Here we extend and expand and let come slowly in from all quarters deliberate impressions, accumulated messages. The mind is so saturated with sensibility, language so inadequate to its experience, that, far from ruling off one form of literature or decreeing its inferiority to others, we complain that they are still unable to keep pace with the wealth of material, and wait impatiently the creation

of what may yet be devised to liberate us of the enormous burden of the unexpressed.

Thus, in spite of dullness, bombast, rhetoric, and confusion, we still read the lesser Elizabethans, still find ourselves adventuring in the land of the jeweller and the unicorn. The familiar factories of Liverpool fade into thin air and we scarcely recognise any likeness between the knight who imported timber and died of pneumonia at Muswell Hill and the Armenian Duke who fell like a Roman on his sword while the owl shrieked in the ivy and the Duchess gave birth to a still-born babe 'mongst women howling. To join those territories and recognise the same man in different disguises, we have to adjust and revise. But make the necessary alterations in perspective, draw in those filaments of sensibility which the moderns have so marvellously developed, use instead the ear and the eye which the moderns have so basely starved, hear words as they are laughed and shouted, not as they are printed in black letters on the page, see before your eyes the changing faces and living bodies of men and women—put yourself, in short, into a different but not more elementary stage of your reading development and then the true merits of Elizabethan drama will assert themselves. The power of the whole is undeniable. Theirs, too, is the word-coming genius, as if thought plunged into a sea of words and came up dripping. Theirs is is that broad humour based upon the nakedness of the body, which, however arduously the public-spirited may try, is impossible since the body as draped. Then at the back of this, imposing not unity but some

sort of stability, is what we may briefly call a sense of the presence of the Gods. He would be a bold critic who should attempt to impose any creed upon the swarm and variety of the Elizabethan dramatists, and yet it implies some timidity if we take it for granted that a whole literature with common characteristics is a mere evaporation of high spirits, a money-making enterprise, a fluke of the mind which, owing to favourable circumstances, came off successfully. Even in the jungle and the wilderness the compass still points.

"Lord, Lord, that I were dead!"

they are for ever crying.

O thou soft natural death that art joint-twin
To sweetest slumber—

The pageant of the world is marvellous, but the pageant of the world is vanity.

. . . glories
Of human greatness are but pleasing dreams
And shadows soon decaying: on the stage
Of my mortality my youth hath acted
Some scenes of vanity—

To die and be quit of it all is their desire; the bell that tolls throughout the drama is death and disenchantment.

All life is but a wandering to find home,
When we're gone, we're there.

Ruin, weariness, death, perpetually death, stand grimly to confront the other presence of Elizabethan drama which is life: life compact of frigates, fir trees and ivory, of dolphins and the juice of July flowers, of the milk of unicorns and panthers' breath, of ropes of pearl, brains of peacocks and Cretan wine. To this, life at its most reckless and abundant, they reply

Man is a tree that hath no top in cares,
No root in comforts; all his power to live
Is given to no end but t' have power to grieve.

It is this echo flung back and back from the other side of the play which, if it has not the name, still has the effect of the presence of the Gods. So we ramble through the jungle, forest, and wilderness of Elizabethan drama. So we consort with Emperors and clowns, jewellers and unicorns, and laugh and exult and marvel at the splendour and humour and fantasy of it all. A noble rage consumes us when the curtain falls; we are bored too, and nauseated by the wearisome old tricks and florid bombast. A dozen deaths of full-grown men and women move us less than the suffering of one of Tolstoi's flies. Wandering in the maze of the impossible and tedious story suddenly some passionate intensity seizes us; some sublimity exalts, or some melodious snatch of song enchants. It is a world full of tedium and delight, pleasure and curiosity, of extravagant laughter, poetry, and splendour. But gradually it comes over us, what then are we being

denied? What is it that we are coming to want so persistently, that unless we get it instantly we must seek elsewhere? It is solitude. There is no privacy here. Always the door opens and some one comes in. All is shared, made visible, audible, dramatic. Meanwhile, as if tired with company, the mind steals off to muse in solitude; to think, not to act; to comment, not to share; to explore its own darkness, not the bright-lit-up surfaces of others. It turns to Donne, to Montaigne, to Sir Thomas Browne, to the keepers of the keys of solitude.

ART AND RITUAL

The title of this essay may strike the reader as strange and even dissonant. What have art and ritual to do together? The ritualist is, to the modern mind, a man concerned perhaps unduly with fixed forms and ceremonies, with carrying out the rigidly prescribed ordinances of a church or sect. The artist, on the other hand, we think of as free in thought and untrammelled by convention in practice; his tendency is towards licence. Art and ritual, it is quite true, have diverged to-day; but the title of this essay is chosen advisedly. Its object is to show that these two divergent developments have a common root, and that neither can be understood without the other. It is at the outset one and the same impulse that sends a man to church and to the theatre.

Such a statement may sound to-day paradoxical, even irreverent. But to the Greek of the sixth, fifth, and even fourth century B.C., it would have been a simple truism. We shall see this best by following an Athenian to his theatre, on the day of the great Spring Festival of Dionysos.

Passing through the entrance-gate to the theatre on the south side of the Acropolis, our Athenian citizen will find himself at once on holy ground. He is within a *temenos* or precinct, a place "cut off" from the common land and dedicated to a god. He will pass to the left two temples standing near to each

other, one of earlier, the other of later date, for a temple, once built, was so sacred that it would only be reluctantly destroyed. As he enters the actual theatre he will pay nothing for his seat; his attendance is an act of worship, and from the social point of view obligatory; the entrance fee is therefore paid for him by the State.

The theatre is open to all Athenian citizens, but the ordinary man will not venture to seat himself in the front row. In the front row, and that only, the seats have backs, and the central seat of this row is an arm-chair; the whole of the front row is permanently reserved, not for individual rich men who can afford to hire "boxes," but for certain State officials, and these officials are all priests. On each seat the name of the owner is inscribed; the central seat is "of the priest of Dionysos Eleuthereus," the god of the precinct. Near him is the seat "of the priest of Apollo the Laurel-Bearer," and again "of the priest of Asklepios," and "of the priest of Olympian Zeus," and so on round the whole front semicircle. It is as though at His Majesty's the front row of stalls was occupied by the whole bench of bishops, with the Archbishop of Canterbury enthroned in the central stall.

The theatre at Athens is not open night by night, nor even day by day. Dramatic performances take place only at certain high festivals of Dionysos in winter and spring. It is, again, as though the modern theatre was open only at the festivals of the Epiphany and of Easter. Our modern, at least our Protestant, custom is in direct contrast. We tend on

great religious festivals rather to close than to open our theatres. Another point of contrast is in the time allotted to the performance. We give to the theatre our after-dinner hours, when work is done or at best a couple of hours in the afternoon. The theatre is for us a recreation. The Greek theatre opened at sunrise, and the whole day was consecrated to high and strenuous religious attention. During the five or six days of the great *Dionysia*, the whole city was in a state of unwonted sanctity, under a *taboo*. To distrain a debtor was illegal; any personal assault, however trifling, was sacrilege.

Most impressive and convincing of all is the ceremony that took place on the eve of the performance. By torchlight, accompanied by a great procession, the image of the god Dionysos himself was brought to the theatre and placed in the orchestra. Moreover, he came not only in human but in animal form. Chosen young men of the Athenians in the flower of their youth—*epheboi*—escorted to the precinct a splendid bull. It was expressly ordained that the bull should be "worthy of the god"; he was, in fact, as we shall presently see, the primitive incarnation of the god. It is, again, as though in our modern theatre there stood, "sanctifying all things to our use and us to His service," the human figure of the Saviour, and beside him the Paschal Lamb.

But now we come to a strange thing. A god presides over the theatre, to go to the theatre is an act of worship to the god Dionysos, and yet, when the play begins, three times out of four, of Dionysos we hear nothing. We see, it may be, Agamemnon

returning from Troy, Clytemnestra waiting to slay him, the vengeance of Orestes, the love of Phaedra for Hippolytos, the hate of Medea and the slaying of her children: stories beautiful, tragic, morally instructive it may be, but scarcely, we feel, religious. The orthodox Greeks themselves sometimes complained that in the plays enacted before them there was "nothing to do with Dionysos."

If drama be at the outset divine, with its roots in ritual, why does it issue in an art profoundly solemn, tragic, yet purely human? The actors wear ritual vestments like those of the celebrants at the Eleusinian mysteries. Why, then, do we find them, not executing a religious service or even a drama of gods and goddesses, but rather impersonating mere Homeric heroes and heroines? Greek drama, which seemed at first to give us our clue, to show us a real link between ritual and art, breaks down, betrays us, it would seem, just at the crucial moment, and leaves us with our problem on our hands.

Had we only Greek ritual and art we might well despair. The Greeks are a people of such swift constructive imagination that they almost always obscure any problem of origins. So fair and magical are their cloud-capp'd towers that they distract our minds from the task of digging for foundations. There is scarcely a problem in the origins of Greek mythology and religion that has been solved within the domain of Greek thinking only. Ritual with them was, in the case of drama, so swiftly and completely transmuted into art that, had we had Greek material only to hand, we might never have marked

the transition. Happily, however, we are not confined within the Greek paradise. Wider fields are open to us; our subject is not only Greek, but ancient art and ritual. We can turn at once to the Egyptians, a people slower-witted than the Greeks, and watch their sluggish but more instructive operations. To one who is studying the development of the human mind the average or even stupid child is often more illuminating than the abnormally brilliant. Greece is often too near to us, too advanced, too modern, to be for comparative purposes instructive.

Of all Egyptian, perhaps of all ancient deities, no god has lived so long or had so wide and deep an influence as Osiris. He stands as the prototype of the great class of resurrection-gods who die that they may live again. His sufferings, his death, and his resurrection were enacted year by year in a great mystery-play at Abydos. In that mystery-play was set forth, first, what the Greeks call his *agon*, his contest with his enemy Set; then his *pathos*, his suffering, or downfall and defeat, his wounding, his death, and his burial; finally, his resurrection and "recognition," his *anagnorisis* either as himself or as his only begotten son Horus. Now the meaning of this thrice-told tale we shall consider later: for the moment we are concerned only with the fact that it is set forth both in art and ritual.

At the festival of Osiris small images of the god were made of sand and vegetable earth, his cheek bones were painted green and his face yellow. The images were cast in a mould of pure gold, represent-

ing the god as a mummy. After sunset on the 24th day of the month Choiak, the effigy of Osiris was laid in a grave and the image of the previous year was removed. The intent of all this was made transparently clear by other rites. At the beginning of the festival there was a ceremony of ploughing and sowing. One end of the field was sown with barley, the other with spelt; another part with flax. While this was going on the chief priest recited the ritual of the "sowing of the fields." Into the "garden" of the god, which seems to have been a large pot, were put sand and barley, then fresh living water from the inundation of the Nile was poured out of a golden vase over the "garden" and the barley was allowed to grow up. It was the symbol of the resurrection of the god after his burial, "for the growth of the garden is the growth of the divine substance."

The death and resurrection of the gods, and *pari passu* of the life and fruits of the earth, was thus set forth in ritual, but—and this is our immediate point—it was also set forth in definite, unmistakable art. In the great temple of Isis at Philæ there is a chamber dedicated to Osiris. Here is represented the dead Osiris. Out of his body spring ears of corn, and a priest waters the growing stalk from a pitcher. The inscription to the picture reads: *This is the form of him whom one may not name, Osiris of the mysteries, who springs from the returning waters.* It is but another presentation of the ritual of the month Choiak, in which effigies of the god made of earth and corn were buried. When these effigies were taken up it would be found that the corn

had sprouted actually from the body of the god, and this sprouting of the grain would, as Dr. Frazer says, be " hailed as an omen, or rather as the cause of the growth of the crops."*

Even more vividly is the resurrection set forth in the bas-reliefs that accompany the great Osiris inscription at Denderah. Here the god is represented at first as a mummy swathed and lying flat on his bier. Bit by bit he is seen raising himself up in a series of gymnastically impossible positions, till at last he rises from a bowl—perhaps his " garden "—all but erect, between the outspread wings of Isis, while before him a male figure holds the *crux ansata*, the " cross with a handle," the Egyptian symbol of life. In ritual, the thing desired, *i.e.*, the resurrection, is acted, in art it is represented.

No one will refuse to these bas-reliefs the title of art. In Egypt, then, we have clearly an instance —only one out of many—where art and ritual go hand in hand. Countless bas-reliefs that decorate Egyptian tombs and temples are but ritual practices translated into stone. This, as we shall later see, is an important step in our argument. Ancient art and ritual are not only closely connected, not only do they mutually explain and illustrate each other, but, as we shall presently find, they actually arise out of a common human impulse.

The god who died and rose again is not of course confined to Egypt; he is world-wide. When

* *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, p. 324.

Ezekiel (viii. 14) "came to the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north" he beheld there the "women weeping for Tammuz." This "abomination" the house of Judah had brought with them from Babylon. Tammuz is *Dumuzi*, "the true son," or more fully, *Dumuzi-absu*, "true son of the waters." He too, like Osiris, is a god of the life that springs from inundation and that dies down in the heat of the summer. In Milton's procession of false gods,

> Thammuz came next behind,
> Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured
> The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
> In amorous ditties all a summer's day.

Tammuz in Babylon was the young love of Ishtar. Each year he died and passed below the earth to the place of dust and death, "the land from which there is no returning, the house of darkness, where dust lies on door and bolt." And the goddess went after him, and while she was below, life ceased in the earth, no flower blossomed and no child of animal or man was born.

We know Tammuz, "the true son," best by one of his titles, Adonis, the Lord or King. The Rites of Adonis were celebrated at midsummer. That is certain and memorable; for, just as the Athenian fleet was setting sail on its ill-omened voyage to Syracuse, the streets of Athens were thronged with funeral processions, everywhere was seen the image of the dead god, and the air was full of the lamentations of

weeping women. Thucydides does not so much as mention the coincidence, but Plutarch * tells us those who took account of omens were full of concern for the fate of their countrymen. To start an expedition on the day of the funeral rites of Adonis, the Canaanitish " Lord," was no luckier than to set sail on a Friday, the death-day of the " Lord " of Christendom.

The rites of Tammuz and of Adonis, celebrated in the summer, were rites of death rather than of resurrection. The emphasis is on the fading and dying down of vegetation rather than on its upspringing. The reason of this is simple and will soon become manifest. For the moment we have only to note that while in Egypt the rites of Osiris are represented as much by art as by ritual, in Babylon and Palestine in the feasts of Tammuz and Adonis it is ritual rather than art that obtains.

We have now to pass to another enquiry. We have seen that art and ritual, not only in Greece but in Egypt and Palestine, are closely linked. So closely, indeed, are they linked that we even begin to suspect they may have a common origin. We have now to ask, what is it that links art and ritual so closely together, what have they in common? Do they start from the same impulse, and if so why do they, as they develop, fall so widely asunder?

It will clear the air if we consider for a moment what we mean by art, and also in somewhat greater detail what we mean by ritual.

* *Vit. Nik.*, 13.

Art, Plato* tells us in a famous passage of the *Republic*, is imitation; the artist imitates natural objects, which are themselves in his philosophy but copies of higher realities. All the artist can do is to make a copy of a copy, to hold up a mirror to Nature in which, as he turns it whither he will, "are reflected sun and heavens and earth and man," anything and everything. Never did a statement so false, so wrong-headed, contain so much suggestion of truth—truth which, by the help of analysing ritual—we may perhaps be able to disentangle. But first its falsehood must be grasped, and this is the more important as Plato's misconception in modified form lives on to-day. A painter not long ago thus defined his own art: "The art of painting is the art of imitating solid objects upon a flat surface by means of pigments." A sorry life-work! Few people to-day, perhaps, regard art as the close and realistic copy of Nature; photography has at least scotched, if not slain, that error; but many people still regard art as a sort of improvement on or an "idealization" of Nature. It is the part of the artist, they think, to take suggestions and materials from Nature, and from these to build up, as it were, a revised version. It is, perhaps, only by studying those rudimentary forms of art that are closely akin to ritual that we come to see how utterly wrong-headed is this conception.

Take the representations of Osiris that we have just described—the mummy rising bit by bit from his bier. Can anyone maintain that art is here a

* *Rep.* X. 596-99.

copy or imitation of reality? However "realistic" the painting, it represents a thing imagined not actual. There never was any such person as Osiris, and if there had been, he would certainly never, once mummified, have risen from his tomb. There is no question of fact, and the copy of fact, in the matter. Moreover, had there been, why should anyone desire to make a copy of natural fact? The whole "imitation" theory, to which, and to the element of truth it contains, we shall later have occasion to return, errs, in fact, through supplying no adequate motive for a wide-spread human energy. It is probably this lack of motive that had led other theorizers to adopt the view that art is idealization. Man with pardonable optimism desires, it is thought, to improve on Nature.

Modern science, confronted with a problem like that of the rise of art, no longer casts about to conjecture how art *might* have arisen, she examines how it actually *did* arise. Abundant material has now been collected from among savage peoples of an art so primitive that we hesitate to call it art at all, and it is in these inchoate efforts that we are able to track the secret motive springs that move the artist now as then.

Among the Huichol Indians,* if the people fear a drought from the extreme heat of the sun, they take a clay disk, and on one side of it they paint the 'face' of Father Sun, a circular space surrounded by

* C. H. Lumholtz, *Symbolism of the Huichol Indians*, in *Mem. of the Am. Mus. of Nat. Hist.*, Vol. III, "Anthropology" (1900).

rays of red and blue and yellow which are called his "arrows," for the Huichol sun, like Phœbus Apollo, has arrows for rays. On the reverse side they will paint the progress of the sun through the four quarters of the sky. The journey is symbolized by a large cross-like figure with a central circle for midday. Round the edge are beehive-shaped mounds; these represent the hills of earth. The red and yellow dots that surround the hills are cornfields. The crosses on the hills are signs of wealth and money. On some of the disks birds and scorpions are painted, and on one are curving lines which mean rain. These disks are deposited on the altar of the god-house and left, and then all is well. The intention might be to us obscure, but a Huichol Indian would read it thus: "Father Sun with his broad shield (or 'face') and his arrows rises in the east, bringing money and wealth to the Huichols. His heat and the light from his rays make the corn to grow, but he is asked not to interfere with the clouds that are gathering on the hills."

Now is this art or ritual? It is both and neither. *We* distinguished between a form of prayer and a work of art and count them in no danger of confusion; but the Huichol goes back to that earlier thing, a *presentation.* He utters, expresses his thought about the sun and his emotion about the sun and his relation to the sun, and if "prayer is the soul's sincere desire" he has painted a prayer. It is not a little curious that the same notion comes out in the old Greek word for "prayer," *euchè*. The Greek, when he wanted help in trouble from the

'Saviours," the Dioscuri, carved a picture of them and, if he was a sailor, added a ship. Underneath he inscribed the word *euchè*. It was not to begin with a 'vow' paid, it was a presentation of his strong inner desire, it was a sculptured prayer.

Ritual then involves *imitation;* but does not arise out of it. It desires to recreate an emotion, not to reproduce an object. A rite is, indeed, we shall later see, a sort of stereotyped action, not really practical, but yet not wholly cut loose from practice, a reminiscence or an anticipation of actual practical doing; it is fitly, though not quite correctly, called by the Greeks a *dromenon*, "a thing done."

At the bottom of art, as its motive power and its mainspring, lies, not the wish to copy Nature or even improve on her—the Huichol Indian does not vainly expend his energies on an effort so fruitless—but rather an impulse shared by art with ritual, the desire, that is, to utter, to give out a strongly felt emotion or desire by representing, by making or doing or enriching the object or act desired. The common source of the art and ritual of Osiris is the intense, world-wide desire that the life of Nature which seemed dead should live again. This common *emotional* factor it is that makes art and ritual in their beginnings well-nigh indistinguishable. Both, to begin with, copy an act, but not at first for the sake of the copy. Only when the emotion dies down and is forgotten does the copy become an end in itself, a mere mimicry.

It is this downward path, this sinking of making to mimicry, that makes us now-a-days think of ritual

as a dull and formal thing. Because a rite has ceased to be *believed in*, it does not in the least follow that it will cease to be *done*. We have to reckon with all the huge forces of habit. The motor nerves, once set in one direction, given the slightest impulse, tend always to repeat the same reaction. We mimic not only others but ourselves mechanically, even after all emotion proper to the act is dead; and then because mimicry has a certain ingenious charm, it becomes an end in itself, for ritual, even for art.

It is not easy, as we saw, to classify the Huichol prayer-disks. As prayers they are ritual, as surfaces decorated they are specimens of primitive art. In the next chapter we shall have to consider a kind of ceremony very instructive for our point, but again not very easy to classify—the pantomimic dances which are, almost all over the world, so striking a feature in savage social and religious life. Are they to be classed as ritual or art?

These pantomime dances lie, indeed, at the very heart and root of our whole subject, and it is of the first importance that before going further in our analysis of art and ritual, we should have some familiarity with their general character and gist, the more so as they are a class of ceremonies now practically extinct. We shall find in these dances the meeting-point between art and ritual, or rather we shall find in them the rude, inchoate material out of which both ritual and art, at least in one of its forms, developed. Moreover, we shall find in pantomimic dancing a ritual bridge, as it were, between actual life and those representations of life which we call art.

WORDSWORTH IN THE TROPICS

In the neighbourhood of latitude fifty north, and for the last hundred years or thereabouts, it has been an axiom that Nature is divine and morally uplifting. For good Wordsworthians—and most serious-minded people are now Wordsworthians, either by direct inspiration or at second hand—a walk in the country is the equivalent of going to church, a tour through Westmorland is as good as a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. To commune with the fields and waters, the woodlands and the hills, is to commune, according to our modern and northern ideas, with the visible manifestations of the "Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe."

The Wordsworthian who exports this pantheistic worship of Nature to the tropics is liable to have his religious convictions somewhat rudely disturbed. Nature, under a vertical sun, and nourished by the equatorial rains, is not at all like that chaste, mild deity who presides over the *Gemüthlichkeit*, the prettiness, the cosy sublimities of the Lake District. The worst that Wordsworth's goddess ever did to him was to make him hear

Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod;

was to make him realize, in the shape of "a huge peak, black and huge," the existence of "unknown modes of being." He seems to have imagined that this was the worst Nature *could* do. A few weeks in Malaya or Borneo would have undeceived him. Wandering in the hothouse darkness of the jungle, he would not have felt so serenely certain of those "Presences of Nature," those "Souls of Lonely Places," which he was in the habit of worshipping on the shores of Windermere and Rydal. The sparse inhabitants of the equatorial forest are all believers in devils. When one has visited, in even the most superficial manner, the places where they live, it is difficult not to share their faith. The jungle is marvellous, fantastic, beautiful; but it is also terrifying, it is also profoundly sinister. There is something in what, for lack of a better word, we must call the character of great forests—even in those of temperate lands—which is foreign, appalling, fundamentally and utterly inimical to intruding man. The life of those vast masses of swarming vegetation is alien to the human spirit and hostile to it. Meredith, in his *Woods of Westermaine*, has tried reassuringly to persuade us that our terrors are unnecessary, that the hostility of these vegetable forces is more apparent than real, and that if we will but trust Nature we shall find our fears transformed into serenity, joy, and rapture. This may be sound philosophy in the neighbourhood of Dorking; but it begins to be dubious, even in the forests of Germany—there is too much of them for a human being to feel himself at ease within their enormous glooms; and when the woods of

Borneo are substituted for those of Westermaine, Meredith's comforting doctrine becomes frankly ridiculous.

It is not the sense of solitude that distresses the wanderer in equatorial jungles. Loneliness is bearable enough—for a time, at any rate. There is something actually rather stimulating and exciting about being in an empty place where there is no life but one's own. Taken in reasonably small doses, the Sahara exhilarates, like alcohol. Too much of it, however (I speak, at any rate, for myself), has the depressing effect of the second bottle of Burgundy. But in any case it is not loneliness that oppresses the equatorial traveller: it is too much company; it is the uneasy feeling that he is an alien in the midst of an innumerable throng of hostile beings. To us who live beneath a temperate sky and in the age of Henry Ford, the worship of Nature comes almost naturally. It is easy to love a feeble and already conquered enemy. But an enemy with whom one is still at war, an unconquered, unconquerable, ceaselessly active enemy—no; one does not, one should not, love him. One respects him, perhaps; one has a salutary fear of him; and one goes on fighting. In our latitudes the hosts of Nature have mostly been vanquished and enslaved. Some few detachments, it is true, still hold the field against us. There are wild woods and mountains, marshes and heaths, even in England. But they are there only on sufferance, because we have chosen, out of our good pleasure, to leave them their freedom. It has not been worth our while to reduce them to slavery. We love them

because we are the masters, because we know that at any moment we can overcome them as we overcame their fellows. The inhabitants of the tropics have no such comforting reasons for adoring the sinister forces which hem them in on every side. For us, the notion 'river' implies (how obviously!) the notion 'bridge.' When we think of a plain, we think of agriculture, towns, and good roads. The corollary of mountain is tunnel; of swamp, an embankment; of distance, a railway. At latitude zero, however, the obvious is not the same as with us. Rivers imply wading, swimming, alligators. Plains mean swamps, forests, fevers. Mountains are either dangerous or impassable. To travel is to hack one's way laboriously through a tangled, prickly, and venomous darkness. "God made the country," said Cowper, in his rather too blank verse. In New Guinea he would have had his doubts; he would have longed for the man-made town.

The Wordsworthian adoration of Nature has two principal defects. The first, as we have seen, is that it is only possible in a country where Nature has been nearly or quite enslaved to man. The second is that it is only possible for those who are prepared to falsify their immediate intuitions of Nature. For Nature, even in the temperate zone, is always alien and inhuman, and occasionally diabolic. Meredith explicitly invites us to explain any unpleasant experiences away. We are to interpret them, Pangloss fashion, in terms of a preconceived philosophy; after which, all will surely be for the best in the best of all possible Westermaines. Less openly, Words-

worth asks us to make the same falsification of immediate experience. It is only very occasionally that he admits the existence in the world around him of those " unknown modes of being " of which our immediate intuitions of things make us so disquietingly aware. Normally what he does is to pump the dangerous Unknown out of Nature and refill the emptied forms of hills and woods, flowers and waters, with something more reassuringly familiar—with humanity, with Anglicanism. He will not admit that a yellow primrose is simply a yellow primrose—beautiful, but essentially strange, having its own alien life apart. He wants it to possess some sort of soul, to exist humanly, not simply flowerily. He wants the earth to be more than earthy, to be a divine person. But the life of vegetation is radically unlike the life of man: the earth has a mode of being that is certainly not the mode of being of a person. " Let Nature be your teacher," says Wordsworth. The advice is excellent. But how strangely he himself puts it into practice! Instead of listening humbly to what the teacher says, he shuts his ears and himself dictates the lesson he desires to hear. The pupil knows better than his master; the worshipper substitutes his own oracles for those of the god. Instead of accepting the lesson as it is given to his immediate intuitions, he distorts it rationalistically into the likeness of a parson's sermon or a professorial lecture. Our direct intuitions of Nature tell us that the world is bottomlessly strange: alien, even when it is kind and beautiful; having inumerable modes of being that are not our modes; always mysteriously not personal,

not conscious, not moral; often hostile and sinister; sometimes even unimaginably, because inhumanly, evil. In his youth, it would seem, Wordsworth left his direct intuitions of the world unwarped.

The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.

As the years passed, however, he began to interpret them in terms of a preconceived philosophy. Procrustes-like, he tortured his feelings and perceptions until they fitted his system. By the time he was thirty,

The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls—
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and regions of the heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree.

Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

"Something far more deeply interfused" had made its appearance on the Wordsworthian scene. The god of Anglicanism had crept under the skin of things, and all the stimulatingly inhuman strangeness of Nature had become as flatly familiar as a page from a text-book of metaphysics or theology. As familiar and as safely simple. Pantheistically interpreted, our intuitions of Nature's endless varieties of impersonal mysteriousness lose all their exciting and disturbing quality. It makes the world seem delightfully cosy, if you can pretend that all the many alien things about you are really only manifestations of one person. It is fear of the labyrinthine flux and complexity of phenomena that has driven men to philosophy, to science, to theology—fear of the complex reality driving them to invent a simpler, more manageable, and therefore, consoling fiction. For simple, in comparison with the external reality of which we have direct intuitions, childishly simple is even the most elaborate and subtle system devised by the human mind. Most of the philosophical systems hitherto popular have not been subtle and elaborate even by human standards. Even by human standards they have been crude, bald, preposterously straightforward. Hence their popularity. Their simplicity has rendered them instantly comprehensible. Weary with much wandering in the maze of phenomena, frightened by the inhospitable strangeness of the

world, men have rushed into the systems prepared for them by philosophers and founders of religions as they would rush from a dark jungle into the haven of a well-lit, commodious house. With a sigh of relief and a thankful feeling that here at last is their true home, they settle down in their snug metaphysical villa and go to sleep. And how furious they are when any one comes rudely knocking at the door to tell them that their villa is jerry-built, dilapidated, unfit for human habitation, even non-existent! Men have been burnt at the stake for even venturing to criticize the colour of the front door or the shape of the third-floor windows.

That man must build himself some sort of metaphysical shelter in the midst of the jungle of immediately apprehended reality is obvious. No practical activity, no scientific research, no speculation is possible without some preliminary hypothesis about the nature and the purpose of things. The human mind cannot deal with the universe directly, nor even with its own immediate intuitions of the universe. Whenever it is a question of thinking about the world or of practically modifying it, men can only work on a symbolic plan of the universe, only on a simplified two-dimensional map of things abstracted by the mind out of the complex and multifarious reality of immediate intuition. History shows that these hypotheses about the nature of things are valuable even when, as later experience reveals, they are false. Man approaches the unattainable truth through a succession of errors. Confronted by the strange complexity of things, he invents,

quite arbitrarily, a simple hypothesis to explain and justify the world. Having invented he proceeds to act and think in terms of this hypothesis, as though it were correct. Experience gradually shows him where his hypothesis is unsatisfactory and how it should be modified. Thus, great scientific discoveries have been made by men seeking to verify quite erroneous theories about the nature of things. The discoveries have necessitated a modification of the original hypotheses, and further discoveries have been made in the effort to verify the modifications—discoveries which, in their turn, have led to yet further modifications. And so on, indefinitely. Philosophical and religious hypotheses, being less susceptible of experimental verification than the hypotheses of science, have undergone far less modification. For example, the pantheistic hypothesis of Wordsworth is an ancient doctrine, which human experience has hardly modified throughout history. And rightly, no doubt. For it is obvious that there must be some sort of unity underlying the diversity of phenomena; for if there were not, the world would be quite unknowable. Indeed, it is precisely in the knowableness of things, in the very fact that they are known, that their fundamental unity consists. The world which we know, and which our minds have fabricated out of goodness knows what mysterious things in themselves, possesses the unity which our minds have imposed upon it. It is part of our thought, hence fundamentally homogeneous. Yes, the world is obviously one. But at the same time it is no less obviously diverse. For if the world were absolutely one, it

would no longer be knowable, it would cease to exist. Thought must be divided against itself before it can come to any knowledge of itself. Absolute oneness is absolute nothingness: homogeneous perfection, as the Hindus perceived and courageously recognized, is equivalent to non-existence, is *nirvana*. The Christian idea of a perfect heaven that is something other than a non-existence is a contradiction in terms. The world in which we live may be fundamentally one, but it is a unity divided up into a great many diverse fragments. A tree, a table, a newspaper, a piece of artificial silk are all made of wood. But they are, none the less, distinct and separate objects. It is the same with the world at large. Our immediate intuitions are of diversity. We have only to open our eyes to recognize a multitude of different phenomena. These intuitions of diversity are as correct, as well justified, as is our intellectual conviction of the fundamental homogeneity of the various parts of the world with one another and with ourselves. Circumstances have led humanity to set an ever-increasing premium on the conscious and intellectual comprehension of things. Modern man's besetting temptation is to sacrifice his direct perceptions and spontaneous feelings to his reasoned reflections; to prefer in all circumstances the verdict of his intellect to that of his immediate intuitions. "L'homme est visiblement fait pour penser," says Pascal; "c'est toute sa dignité et tout son mérite; et tout son devoir est de penser comme il faut." Noble words; but do they happen to be true? Pascal seems to forget that man has something else to do besides

think: he must live. Living may not be so dignified or so meritorious as thinking (particularly when you happen to be, like Pascal, a chronic invalid); but it is, perhaps unfortunately, a necessary process. If one would live well, one must live completely, with the whole being—with the body and the instincts, as well as with the conscious mind. A life lived, as far as may be, exclusively from the consciousness and in accordance with the considered judgments of the intellect, is a stunted life, a half-dead life. This is a fact that can be confirmed by daily observation. But consciousness, the intellect, the spirit, have acquired an inordinate prestige; and such is men's snobbish respect for authority, such is their pedantic desire to be consistent, that they go on doing their best to lead the exclusively conscious, spiritual, and intellectual life, in spite of its manifest disadvantages. To know is pleasant; it is exciting to be conscious; the intellect is a valuable instrument, and for certain purposes the hypotheses which it fabricates are of great practical value. Quite true. But, therefore, say the moralists and men of science, drawing conclusions only justified by their desire for consistency, therefore *all* life should be lived from the head, consciously, *all* phenomena should at *all* times be interpreted in terms of the intellect's hypotheses. The religious teachers are of a slightly different opinion. All life, according to them, should be lived spiritually, not intellectually. Why? On the grounds, as we discover when we push our analysis far enough, that certain occasional psychological states, currently called spiritual, are extremely agreeable and have valuable

consequences in the realm of social behaviour. The unprejudiced observer finds it hard to understand why these people should set such store by consistency of thought and action. Because oysters are occasionally pleasant, it does not follow that one should make of oysters one's exclusive diet. Nor should one take castor-oil every day because castor-oil is occasionally good for one. Too much consistency is as bad for the mind as it is for the body. Consistency is contrary to Nature, contrary to life. The only completely consistent people are the dead. Consistent intellectualism and spirituality may be socially valuable, up to a point; but they make, gradually, for individual death. And individual death, when the slow murder has been consummated, is finally social death. So that the social utility of pure intellectualism and pure spirituality is only apparent and temporary. What is needed is, as ever, a compromise. Life must be lived in different ways at different moments. The only satisfactory way of existing in the modern, highly specialized world is to live with two personalities. A Dr. Jekyll that does the metaphysical and scientific thinking, that transacts business in the city, adds up figures, designs machines, and so forth. And a natural spontaneous Mr. Hyde to do the physical, instinctive living in the intervals of work. The two personalities should lead their unconnected lives apart, without poaching on one another's preserves or enquiring too closely into one another's activities. Only by living discretely and inconsistently can we preserve both the man and the citizen, both the intellectual and the spontaneous animal being, alive within us. The solution may not

be very satisfactory; but it is, I believe now (though once I thought differently), the best that, in the modern circumstances, can be devised.

The poet's place, it seems to me, is with the Mr. Hydes of human nature. He should be, as Blake remarked of Milton, "of the devil's party without knowing it"—or preferably with the full consciousness of being of the devil's party. There are so many intellectual and moral angels battling for rationalism, good citizenship, and pure spirituality; so many and such eminent ones, so very vocal and authoritative! The poor devil in man needs all the support and advocacy he can get. The artist is his natural champion. When an artist deserts to the side of the angels, it is the most odious of treasons. How unforgivable, for example, is Tolstoy! Tolstoy, the perfect Mr. Hyde, the complete embodiment, if ever there was one, of non-intellectual, non-moral, instinctive life—Tolstoy, who betrayed his own nature, betrayed his art, betrayed life itself, in order to fight against the devil's party of his earlier allegiances, under the standard of Dr. Jesus-Jekyll. Wordsworth's betrayal was not so spectacular: he was never so wholly of the devil's party as Tolstoy. Still, it was bad enough. It is difficult to forgive him for so utterly repenting his youthful passions and enthusiasms, and becoming, personally as well as politically, the anglican tory. One remembers B. R. Haydon's account of the poet's reactions to that charming classical sclupture of Cupid and Psyche. "The devils!" he said malignantly, after a long-drawn contemplation of their marble embrace. "The devils!" And he was not using the

word in the complimentary sense in which I have employed it here: he was expressing his hatred of passion and life, he was damning the young man he had himself been—the young man who had hailed the French Revolution with delight and begotten an illegitimate child. From being an ardent lover of the nymphs, he had become one of those all too numerous

> woodmen who expel
> Love's gentle dryads from the haunts of life,
> And vex the nightingales in every dell.

Yes, even the nightingales he vexed. Even the nightingales, though the poor birds can never, like those all too human dryads, have led him into sexual temptation. Even the innocuous nightingales were moralized, spiritualized, turned into citizens and anglicans—and along with the nightingales, the whole of animate and inanimate Nature.

The change in Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature is symptomatic of his general apostasy. Beginning as what I may call a natural aesthete, he transformed himself, in the course of years, into a moralist, a thinker. He used his intellect to distort his exquisitely acute and subtle intuitions of the world, to explain away their often disquieting strangeness, to simplify them into a comfortable metaphysical unreality. Nature had endowed him with the poet's gift of seeing more than ordinarily far into the brick walls of external reality, of intuitively comprehending the character of the bricks, of feeling the

quality of their being, and establishing the appropriate relationship with them. But he preferred to think his gifts away. He preferred, in the interests of a preconceived religious theory, to ignore the disquieting strangeness of things, to interpret the impersonal diversity of Nature in terms of a divine, anglican unity. He chose, in a word, to be a philosopher, comfortably at home with a man-made and, therefore, thoroughly comprehensible system, rather than a poet adventuring for adventure's sake through the mysterious world revealed by his direct and undistorted intuitions.

It is a pity that he never travelled beyond the boundaries of Europe. A voyage through the tropics would have cured him of his too easy and comfortable pantheism. A few months in the jungle would have convinced him that the diversity and utter strangeness of Nature are at least as real and significant as its intellectually discovered unity. Nor would he have felt so certain, in the damp and stifling darkness, among the leeches and the malevolently tangled rattans, of the divinely anglican character of that fundamental unity. He would have learned once more to treat Nature naturally, as he treated it in his youth; to react to it spontaneously, loving where love was the appropriate emotion, fearing, hating, fighting whenever Nature presented itself to his intuition as being, not merely strange, but hostile, inhumanly evil. A voyage would have taught him this. But Wordsworth never left his native continent. Europe is so well gardened that it resembles a work of art, a scientific theory, a neat metaphysical

system. Man has re-created Europe in his own image. Its tamed and temperate nature confirmed Wordsworth in his philosophizings. The poet, the devil's partisan were doomed; the angels triumphed. Alas!